HUNTER TRAVEL GUIDES

DOMINICA & ST. LUCIA ALIVE!

Lynne M Sullivan

VISIT…

DOMINICA & ST. LUCIA ALIVE!

Lynne M. Sullivan

HUNTER

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From The Author

Since I live in Dallas, on the flat, landlocked plains of North Texas, I take every opportunity to travel to places with water, sand, mountains, and trees. Now, after several years as a staff and freelance writer for general-interest newspapers and magazines, I'm able to devote all my time to writing about the places I visit.

When I begin each article and book, my goal is to give readers something extra to make a destination real and exciting, so they will want to visit there, too. I'm an avid walker and hiker who always wants to see what's around the next corner and over one more hill. Some days I prowl around dressed in cutoffs and a T-shirt peeking into windows, following the locals to out-of-the-way spots, eating in comfy family-run joints, and checking out quaint little inns. At other times, I dress up to fit in at the best resorts, restaurants, and shops. By the end of my trip, I've discovered the best places to eat, sleep, and hang out on a stingy budget as well as on unlimited funds. I've seen sites and visited places that aren't usually mentioned in travel guides, and talked to experts and average citizens who know the destinations well.

But the trip is only half the fun for me. Sharing my discoveries is the other. By giving readers tips, help, and suggestions on how to make their own vacations exciting, unique, and worry-free, I get to experience the vacation all over again.

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Alive Guides featured include: *Aruba, Bonaire & Curaçao, Buenos Aires & The Best of Argentina, Venezuela, The Cayman Islands, Cancún & Cozumel* and *The Virgin Islands*.

Check out our *Adventure Guides*, a series aimed at the independent traveler who enjoys outdoor activities (rafting, hiking, biking, skiing, canoeing, etc.). All books in this signature series cover places to stay and eat, sightseeing, in-town attractions, transportation and more!

Hunter's *Romantic Weekends* series offers myriad things to do for couples of all ages and lifestyles. Quaint places to stay and restaurants where the ambiance will take your breath away are included, along with fun activities that you and your partner will remember forever.

About the Alive Guides

Reliable, detailed and personally researched by knowledgeable authors, the *Alive!* series was founded by Harriet and Arnold Greenberg.

This accomplished travel-writing team also operates a renowned bookstore, **The Complete Traveller**, at 199 Madison Avenue in New York City.

We Love to Get Mail

This book has been carefully researched to bring you current, accurate information. But no place is unchanging. We welcome your comments for future editions. Please write us at: *The Alive Guides*, c/o Hunter Publishing, 130 Campus Drive, Edison, NJ 08818, or e-mail your comments to hunterp@bellsouth.net.

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Introduction

This guide gives you current information and insider tips on spots often overlooked by other travel books.

Best Places to Stay and *Best Places to Eat* cover a wide range of accommodations and restaurants so you may plan according to your budget and preferences.

Exploring the Island is designed as a turn-by-turn driving trip that includes reviews of all major towns and most small villages. A *Brief History* is included to enhance your sightseeing experiences, and *Festivals, Events & Holidays* are explained so you'll have more fun, whether you're a participant or observer.

Sunup to Sundown activities get special consideration, so you don't have to waste precious vacation time researching the best attractions. You'll find where to rent a bike, how to find the hiking trails, which dive sites are best, and what features make one tour operator different from another.

The *Top Shops* chapter includes directions and reviews for open-air markets, upscale shops – even supermarkets. Special attention is given to resident artists and locally produced items.

After Dark suggestions include the best entertainment options, crowd-pleasing happy hours, and romantic hideouts.

Finally, the *A-Z* section gives you a quick reference for additional resources, important telephone numbers, and statistical data.

The Islands

Dominica and Saint Lucia are independent English-speaking island nations lying between the Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea in an archipelago known as the Windward Islands of the Lesser Antilles.

They share a laid-back pace, tropical climate, remarkable scenery, and abundant sun, sea, and sand. Yet, each has a distinct character and unique attractions. Many differences are subtle, but a visit to one is clearly unlike a trip to the other. While the French island of Martinique separates the two, distances are short, and it's quite possible to combine both into one vacation.

Don't confuse tiny Dominica with the Dominican Republic, an independent nation that shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti.

Best Attractions and Activities

- 4,747-foot Morne Diablotin, Dominica's highest peak.
- St. Lucia's famous twin peaks, the Pitons.
- Two endangered parrot species living in a 22,000-acre forest reserve on Dominica.
- Virgin coral reefs off the St. Lucian coast.
- Dominica's Emerald Pool at the foot of a 40-foot waterfall.
- Fort Charlotte, sitting atop St. Lucia's 2,795-foot Morne Fortune.
- Trafalgar Falls, a Dominican waterfall that drops 200 feet into hot sulphur springs.
- Friday night street parties in the St. Lucian fishing village of Gros Islet.

- A six-mile hike to Dominica's huge Boiling Lake.
- The fort on Rodney Hill in Pigeon Island National Park on St. Lucia.

Location

Dominica, the northernmost of the two islands, is about 1,500 miles (2,414 km or 1,303 nautical miles) southeast of Miami and 1,763 miles (2,838 km or 1,532 nautical miles) east of Honduras, Central America. The Caribbean Sea is to the west. The Atlantic Ocean is to the east. The independent Commonwealth of Dominica is sandwiched between the French-aligned islands of Guadeloupe, to the north, and Martinique, to the south.

St. Lucia sits south of Martinique and north of the multi-island nation of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Language

English is the official language on both Dominica and St. Lucia. However, most locals communicate in a hybrid language known to scholars as Lesser Antillean Creole French. Residents of remote villages on the northeast side of Dominica speak a pidgin English called *cocoy*. You probably won't be able to decipher much of the conversation between citizens in either patois, but most islanders will switch to understandable standard English when they speak with tourists.

Although the Creole language is based on French, only 10% of the population understands or is literate in standard French, so leave your phrase book at home. If you enjoy knowing how to speak the local lan-

guage while on vacation, you may want to learn a few Creole expressions, but that's not at all necessary.

Lesser Antillean Creole French (spelled Kwéyòl on St Lucia and Dominica) is heard regularly on radio and TV and is spoken by well-educated professionals in business offices, as well as by average citizens on the street. According to the 14th edition of *Ethnologue, Languages of the World,* edited by Barbara F. Grimes, the language has an established orthography (spelling) and grammar, and Kwéyòl is used in literary works and newspapers. However, most islanders cannot read or write it. In fact, only a third of the population is literate in standard English, which is taught in schools.

Presumably, as more youth take advantage of public education, the literacy rate will improve. Even now, those who work for international or tourist-oriented businesses read, write, speak, and understand English quite well. As a visitor, you are unlikely to have problems communicating on either island, and you may even begin to understand a few phrases on radio and TV.

If you're interested in hearing or learning simple Kwéyòl phrases before your trip, log onto http://stlucia.org/kweyol.htm, a St. Lucia Internet address that runs audio on *RealAudio*, which can be downloaded from the site. Another website, http://www.travlang.com/languages/cgi-bin/langchoice.cgi, offers a good vocabulary list, but the sound portion is less user-friendly.

A Few Words to Know

English	Kwéyòl
Yes	Wí, Éwè, Anhan

No	Non
Thank you	Mèsi
Thank you very much	Mèsi plen
You're welcome	D-anyen
Please	Souplé, Tanti
Excuse me	Eskize
Hello	Alo
Goodbye	Orevwa
So long	Ovwa
Good morning	Bon maten
Good afternoon	Bon jou
Good evening	Bon aswè
Good night	Bon nuit
I do not understand	M' pa ka konprann
I	Mwen, An
We	Nou
You (singular, familiar)	Nou, Ou
They	Yo
What is your name?	Kijan pa-w non?
Nice to meet you	Kontan
How are you?	Ka ou fé?, Ka sa yé?
Good	Byen
Bad	Mové

Fast Facts		
	St. Lucia	***Dominica***
Population	155,000	73,000
Area	238 sq miles	290 sq miles
Length	27 miles	29 miles
Width	14 miles	16 miles
Highest point	3,118 feet	4,747 feet
Political Status	Independent	Independent
Language	English/Kwéyòl	English/Kwéyòl
Geography	Mountains/ rainforest	Mountains/ rainforests
Average high temp	81°F January/ 85°F July	85°F January/ 90°F July
Average low temp	68°F January/ 72°F July	68°F January/ 72°F July
Electricity	220 volts AC, 50 cycles	220 volts AC, 50 cycles

A Shared Past

Dominica and St. Lucia share a common history with other Windward Islands. Stone Age civilizations may have inhabited Caribbean lands as early as 4000 BC, but only sparse evidence of their existence remains. Since early European explorers failed to write down details about the people they found living on the islands when they arrived, most current information is pieced together from archaeological discoveries.

Probably the first people to live on most of the Windwards were wandering hunters and gatherers of the pre-pottery or Archaic Period. Around the beginning of the Christian era, tribes from South America, who

spoke a language known as Arawak, migrated to the islands. By the time Europeans arrived in the Southern Caribbean, most of these tribes had been displaced by aggressive South American groups known as Caribs.

Life of the Arawaks & Caribs

Each Arawak village had a chief who lived in a rectangular hut or *bohios*, while other members of the tribe lived in round huts called *caneyes*. Both dwellings were simple structures made of wooden frames topped by straw roofs, but they were sturdy enough to withstand hurricanes.

Villagers worshiped wooden and stone idols, called *zemis*. These gods were thought to protect deserving humans from illness and storms, so the villagers offered gifts and food to them as tokens of devotion. A village and its chief were ranked in importance among the tribes by the number of *zemis* in their possession.

Arawaks were successful farmers and produced cassava (used in tapioca), maize, potatoes, peanuts, peppers, beans, and arrowroot, using the slash-and-burn method of cultivation. They had simple tools made of sticks, called *coas*, and may have used ash or feces as fertilizers. In addition, they hunted and fished with baskets, nets, and sharp sticks. Large fish were sometimes caught by attaching sharpened sticks to *remoras*, small sucking fish that fastened themselves to larger sea creatures, such as sharks and turtles.

Food was cooked on hot stones or over an open fire, using peppers, herbs, and spices for flavor. Villagers preserved some foods with spices, but most was eaten fresh since the tropical climate allowed year-round farming, hunting, and fishing.

The Caribs were more mobile and less ceremonial than the Arawaks. Their villages were smaller, sometimes made up of only extended family members, with the head of the family acting as village leader. They lived in little wooden huts arranged around a central fireplace, which was probably used for community meetings.

Village leaders supervised fishing, done by the men, and farming, which was done by the women. In addition, they mediated disputes among the people and led raids into neighboring settlements to capture wives for the young men in the village. Wives were often taken from Arawak tribes, most likely so that the women could raise the children with Arawak skills and manners.

Raids and combat were important activities for Carib men, and their reputation as feared warriors is legend in the Caribbean. They attacked in long canoes that could carry up to 75 men, using poisoned arrows, javelins, and clubs to subdue their foes. Rumors spread among the Arawaks that captured women were used as slaves or slave-wives. Reportedly, seized men were cooked over ceremonial fires and eaten. However, European explorers never witnessed cannibalism, and the Arawak accounts are questionable.

By the time Spanish explorers arrived in the late 15th century, the Arawak and Carib cultures had mingled, and both tribes were spending more time on agriculture than fighting. Nevertheless, Europeans were intimidated by the appearance of the Indians, who painted their bodies in bright colors and wore gold or shell jewelry in their noses and ears.

Perhaps it was their appearance that caused the Europeans to overreact and slaughter or capture the Indians. The Arawaks quickly were wiped out, but the scattered, pugnacious Caribs managed to survive on

some islands. In the 17th century, they were successful in resisting European settlement on Dominica and Saint Lucia. Carib descendants still live in an area known as Carib Territory on Dominica.

Europeans Arrive

Christopher Columbus is generally credited with *discovering* the Caribbean Islands during four voyages between 1492 and 1502. However, Europeans shunned colonization for more than a century because they feared the native inhabitants and were disappointed at the absence of gold.

It wasn't until the early 1600s, when France and England recognized the potential value of the islands' fertile soil and year-round growing season, that colonization began in earnest. Slaves were brought in from Africa to work the land, and native tribes were wiped out or driven onto reservations. The French and British fought over possession of Dominica and St. Lucia for years, and evidence of both cultures is mixed with African influences and native Carib traditions on both islands.

You'll find additional historical details under "A Brief History" near the beginning of each island's section.

Climate

As is typical of all the Caribbean, the northern Windwards enjoy a year-round average temperature of 77°F. Daytime highs occasionally reach 90°F, and nighttime lows may dip to 55°F, but temperatures usually range from 65°F to 85°F in non-mountainous areas of the islands. The tropical Atlantic and Caribbean waters maintain an average temperature of 80°F all year.

Hurricane Facts

- Hurricane season runs from June 1 through November 30, but most of them occur from around the middle of August through the middle of October.
- A hurricane's winds flow counterclockwise in the Northern Hemisphere and clockwise in the Southern Hemisphere toward the storm's center, and the entire system is pushed by upper-atmosphere winds 10,000 to 40,000 feet above the earth.
- While any wind 75 mph or faster is *hurricane force*, such winds don't always come from hurricanes.
- Hurricanes only form over tropical oceans, and their force weakens quickly when they move over land or cold water.
- Typhoons and hurricanes are basically the same type of storm. They are called typhoons in the western part of the north Pacific. In the eastern part of the north Pacific, as well as the Atlantic, Caribbean, and Gulf of Mexico, they are called hurricanes. In the rest of the world, they are known as *tropical cyclones*.
- No hurricane has ever hit California, but they occasionally do hit Mexico's west coast.
- A small hurricane is about 100 miles wide; a large one may be 300 miles across. Some last only a few hours before they weaken, while others maintain hurricane strength for two weeks.

Forecasters began naming hurricanes in 1950. At first they used words from the international phonetic alphabet – Able, Baker, Charlie, etc. Women's names common to English-speaking countries were first used in 1953. Beginning in 1979, forecasters began alternating male and female names common to French, English, and Spanish countries.

A great seasonal difference is found in rainfall. Summer, May to November, is rainy season. Winter, December to April, is drier. Even during the wet season, most days have hours of sun, and the resulting humidity is made comfortable by trade winds. While rainfall varies and is difficult to generalize, expect more rain at higher elevations and on the northeast side of both islands.

You may want to avoid peak hurricane season – midsummer through early fall.

The Land

Dominica and St. Lucia are volcanic, with steep mountains, deep river gorges, lush forests, tumbling waterfalls, and astonishingly beautiful coastlines. Both islands treasure their natural resources and recognize the value of promoting responsible tourism and conscientious development. For travelers, this means environment-friendly accommodations, regulated exploration of protected lands, and restricted use of underwater preserves.

Tropical vegetation still covers much of each island. More than two-thirds of Dominica is primary rainforest, making it perhaps the most untouched island in the Caribbean. St. Lucia continues to be predominantly rural, and much of its interior rainforest has been preserved. However, the island has suffered

somewhat from imprudent use of the land. Early colonist carved plantations out of a sizeable chunk of forest, and modern developers have built exclusive resorts on prime land. Nevertheless, conservation groups are doing a fine job of curtailing overdevelopment.

Plant Life

A wide assortment of tropical plants and trees flourish on both islands because of sparse development, protected lands, dependable rainfall, and fertile soil. Scrub vegetation along the coasts gives way to dense forests on interior mountainsides, and the volcanic soil sprouts hundreds of species of flowering plants and ferns.

Seagrape trees grow wild along sandy beaches. Some get as tall as 30 feet, and the female bears clusters of fruit that turn purple when they ripen. These "grapes' are edible, but most people prefer them sweetened in jams or desserts. Coconut palms also are common on the beaches, and they can grow in sandy areas where few other plants survive. Islanders drink the liquid from the shell before eating the soft meat inside.

Orchids, African tulip trees, ferns, hibiscus and bird-of-paradise are cultivated in gardens and grow wild throughout the islands. Even drier land supports colorful bushes such as oleanders, and a variety of fruit trees grow along the roadways. Much of the local diet is based on the abundant supply of mangos, bananas, papayas, soursops, passionfruit, guavas and coconuts.

Huge gommier and chatagnier trees are the tallest and most impressive in the rainforests. They tower over a tangle of vines, ferns, and mosses. Drier areas support cactus and cedars. Throughout both islands, gorgeous flamboyant trees (poinciana) put out a blast

of red flowers every summer, and African tulip trees turn orange with blossoms each spring.

> **Warning:**
>
> One tree to watch out for is the machineel. They typically grow along the coast, and most are identified by signs or a line of red paint on the trunk. The sap and small fruit of this tree are poisonous and cause intense stinging if they come in contact with the skin. Illness or death can result from eating the fruit.

The national plant of St. Lucia is the strong-smelling pink cabbage rose. The national tree is the calabash. On Dominica, the national flower is the bwa kwaib or carib wood. It grows wild in dry coastal areas, and bright red flowers bloom along its branches.

Birds

You don't have to be a bird watcher to get caught up by the vast number and variety of species that live on or migrate through the northern Windwards. They land on your table when you eat outdoors, tease you while you try to nap on the beach, and steal small items off your patio when you're not looking. The following will help you identify a few of the most common winged wildlife:

- The **brown pelican** is grayish-brown with a long neck, long beak, and short legs – usually seen feeding along the shore.
- The **magnificent frigate bird** (magnificent is part of its name) has a wingspan that can

exceed six feet. All of them are jet-black, and the males have red throats, while the females have white throats. They are pirates and hunt everywhere on the islands.

- The small **green-backed heron** has a distinctive call and gray-green feathers. The **great heron** has long legs and a long black feather growing from its white head.
- The **snowy egret** is white with black legs, while the **cattle egret** (usually sitting on a cow) has white plumage and a tuft of orange feathers on its head.
- The **kingfisher** is blue with a white breast and a ruffled tuft on its head. It floats in the air looking for food, and dives into the surf to catch fish.
- The **bananaquit** is a little bird with dark feathers on its back and a bright yellow throat and breast. It loves sugar and will make itself at home on your outdoor table.
- Native **parrots** nest high in the rainforest on Dominica and Saint Lucia. The **sisserou** is Dominica's national bird, and the **jacquot** holds national honors on St. Lucia. All species are rare and endangered, and you probably won't see one unless you hike with a guide in the rainforests.
- **Broad-winged hawks** are frequently seen soaring in wooded areas.
- Various species of **hummingbird**, especially the **purple-throated Carib**, **green-throated Carib**, and the **Antillean crested** are often seen feeding among flowers. The **blue-headed hummingbird** is a rare type found only on Dominica.

➔ The **St. Lucia oriole**, called a "carouge" by residents, is a black and orange or yellow bird found only on St. Lucia.

Mammals, Reptiles & Amphibians

Wildlife on both islands is rather limited. The good news is, there's not much around to bite, sting, or attack you. The bad news is, there's not much around. Other than rats and mice – which you probably don't care to see – wild mammals are limited to opossums, mongooses (a ferret-like animal) and an occasional agouti (a rodent that looks somewhat like a rabbit).

Reptiles are more common, and you will have no trouble finding frogs and toads. The most interesting is the **tree frog**, which is tiny but puts on a loud symphony at night. On Dominica, you might run into a giant, squatty frog known as a **crapaud**, who likes to hang out in forests.

If you order mountain chicken in a restaurant, you'll be eating crapaud legs – considered a delicacy. Forget what it is and order it Créole-style.

Common **geckos** – small, plain lizards – scurry everywhere along walkways, through window sills, and up walls (and usually run under something when you turn a light on at night). Be nice to them. They eat lots of mosquitoes. Native Carib Indians thought they carried evil spirits and spread rumors that they could only be removed from a person's skin with a scalding iron.

Pygmy geckos are only two inches long and found only on St. Lucia. Their color can change various shades of brown to match their surroundings. **House geckos** hide in dark crevices until nightfall, when they scurry throughout dwellings. They grow to be five inches long, mostly tail. **Tree geckos** grow to be about six inches long. They have an elogated body, a stubby tail and can change color to hide on the bark or leaves of trees.

Iguanas look scary with their spiny backs, but they are strict vegetarians and don't care to share space with humans. These large lizards are rare and becoming rarer, so you'll only see them in a few remote areas. The **green iguana** grows up to six feet long, with almost half of the length invested in a whip-like tail. They are on the endangered species list of St. Lucia.

The islands do have snakes, but not as many as you would expect, and most are harmless. Even the **boa constrictors** are non-venomous, and shy away from people. However, the **fer de lance** snake that lives on St. Lucia is poisonous and extremely dangerous. You're not likely to run into this one unless you're in tall brush along river beds, but take extra precautions when you hike, especially if you go off heavily used trails.

Check with locals about recent sightings before you head into an unfamiliar area without a guide.

Sea turtles breathe air but live in warm oceans, except when the females come onto land to lay eggs. All species of these large turtles are endangered, and require 15 to 50 years to reach a reproductive age, so their nesting grounds on sandy beaches are protected by wildlife societies.

Despite the ban on hunting sea turtles, you may see products made from their shiny shells in markets. Don't buy them.

The **leatherback turtle** is the largest in the world; it can grow to five feet and 1,300 pounds. Long flippers extend from its black leathery shell. **Green turtles** have round, smooth shells and a blunt beak with serrated edges. It grows to about four feet and 500 pounds. **Hawksbill turtles** have a pointed beak and a brown, gold, and yellow shell. Adults often measure three feet and weigh up to 175 pounds. **Loggerhead turtles** have a large head and tapered shell. They grow to an average of four feet and their weight tops out at about 400 pounds.

Food & Drink

There are many excellent restaurants on Saint Lucia and Dominica. You may be considering the "meals-included' plan at your hotel, but be sure to try the colorful local cafés for at least a few meals.

Since food in the Caribbean tends to be pricey, those on a limited budget can cut costs by buying breakfast from a bakery and making a picnic of fresh fruit and cheese for lunch. Then, the bulk of the day's food allowance can be spent on dinner in an outstanding restaurant.

Most restaurants in the main towns accept major credit cards, but it's a good idea to have some cash available for smaller establishments outside the tourist areas. US dollars often are accepted on the islands, but you may get an unfavorable conversion rate and almost always receive change back in local currency.

Both islands have a few fast food restaurants serving fried chicken, pizza, and sandwiches, but visitors quickly develop a love for West Indian and Créole dishes. Fresh produce, seafood, and island spices are the bases for both types of cuisine, but West Indian is influenced more by Africa, while Créole takes its cue from France.

Common Menu Items

accras/amarinades - spicy doughnuts/fritters usually made from cod or other fish, but sometimes from vegetables.

balaou - small fried fish.

bakes - a fried dough patty filled with tuna, codfish or corned beef

blaff - spicy lime-and-garlic bouillon used to cook fish. The word is said to come from the sound the fish makes as it hits the boiling liquid.

breadfruit - large melon-like fruit.

cabri - small, bony goat, usually prepared as colombo (see below) or smoked.

calalou/callaloo - soup made with herbs, vegetables, crab, and pork.

carambola - (see starfruit.)

christophine - vegetable similar to a potato, particularly delicious when prepared au gratin.

colombo - curry. In the Caribbean, it is usually a mild green curry that is not as hot as Indian curry. The most common colombo will be cabri, small goat, but occasionally is chicken or pork.

conch/lambi - large shellfish whose chewy meat is served in spicy sauces.

court-bouillon - tomato, pepper, and onion mix.

crabbe de terre/crab farcis - land crab cooked with coconut and hot pepper.

cutter - "hero" sandwich made with meat or fish.

dasheen - root vegetable whose leaves are used in callaloo. The potato-like root is used in a dish called "provisions."

farci - stuffed land crab.

féroce - avocado, hot pepper, and cod salad.

fricassée - fish or meat browned and stewed in a skillet.

guava - round, yellow-orange fruit that becomes sweeter as it ripens.

giraumon - pumpkin.

goat water - spicy stew made of goat meat and often flavored with rum.

igname - any of a wide variety of yams.

lambi - (see conch.)

johnnycake - pancake-like griddle cake made of cornmeal.

langouste - Caribbean lobster, no claws.

mango - sweet green-turning-to-red fruit served fresh and in salsa or salads.

manioc - cassava/tapioca flour.

maracudja - (see passion fruit.)

mauby - a tree whose fruit is used to make a popular tart drink that is sweetened with sugar and spiked with spices.

migan - mashed bananas and breadfruit.

mountain chicken - frog legs that come from the large *crapaud*.

ouassous - big freshwater crayfish.

oursin - sea urchin.

passionfruit - small, round, purplish fruit with many seeds. The juice is a popular drink and flavoring in the Caribbean.

pepperpot - stew made of meat and hot peppers.

pigeon peas - actually seeds from a shrub that are cooked like peas and served with rice.

plantain - a banana-like fruit that is cooked and eaten as a vegetable. Usually fried or grilled.

provisions - root vegetables such as dasheen, yams, sweet potatoes, tannia, pumpkins, and potatoes.

punch planteur - "planter's punch" made with rum, fruit juice, and sugar cane syrup.

rotis - curried meat and/or vegetables wrapped in flat bread like a burrito.

sea-moss drink - rumored to be an aphrodisiac, it tastes somewhat like a vanilla milk shake.

soursop - a spiny green fruit whose tart, acidic juice is made into drinks and sauces.

starfruit - a yellow-green fruit whose skin has five ribs that resemble points of a star. The crunchy flesh can be eaten without peeling.

schrub - a liqueur made by soaking oranges in rum.

soudons - sweet clams.

souse - commonly called souse 'n pudding, the souse is pickled pig's head cooked with spices, while the pudding is sausage made of pig's blood.

souskai - green fruits, grated and macerated in lime juice, salt and hot pepper.

Money Matters

Cash & Exchange Rates

The Eastern Caribbean dollar (EC$) is the legal currency on Dominica and Saint Lucia. All EC$ bills have a similar appearance and are interchangeable, but each island nation that uses them prints their own. They come in denominations of 5, 10, 20, 50, and 100 EC dollars. Coins are available in denominations of 1, 2, 5, 10 and 25 EC cents, as well as 1 EC dollar.

Eastern Caribbean currency is fixed to the US dollar, which is widely accepted on both islands. Other world currencies fluctuate against the EC dollar according to their value in US dollars. While visitors have an easy time exchanging cash and travelers checks to and from US denominations, other world currencies do not fare as well. Canadian and British currencies have a greater (unfavorable) margin between the buying and selling rates, while other currencies often are given below-market value.

It's always a good idea to carry plenty of US$1 bills for tips, some vending machines, and inexpensive purchases. Also, remember to have enough cash for cab fare when you arrive at your destination so you won't be forced to overpay or accept a poor exchange rate. Carry small bills (whether US$ or EC$) because bag handlers and taxi drivers may claim they have no change or, even worse, offer fists full of local coins as change for large-denomination bills.

At publication, the Eastern Caribbean dollar exchanged at a rate of US$1 = EC$2.70 or EC$1 = US$.37, the rate that is used throughout this book.

Credit Cards

Smart travelers use credit cards whenever possible and carry only enough local currency to cover tips and modest purchases. Be aware, however, that small shops and rural businesses may not accept credit cards or foreign money.

The most widely accepted credit cards are Visa, American Express, Diners Club, and Eurocard/MasterCard. Don't count on using cards outside the main tourists areas or in small establishments. Most will take travelers' checks in US dollars, but usually give change in local currency.

Gas stations, even those selling internationally known brands, often require payment in local currency and may refuse to make change for large denominations.

ATMs & Instant Cash

Find a listing of banks under "Dominica A-Z" and "St. Lucia A-Z."

Twenty-four-hour automatic teller machines (ATMs) are located in the largest towns of both islands, with Cirrus and Plus the most widely accepted networks. You also can get a cash advance in local currency on a major credit card at most banks.

Entry Requirements

Caribbean islands are glad to see you, but eager to know when you'll be leaving. Visitors are not allowed to enter Dominica or Saint Lucia without a return ticket home. Island-hopping travelers should know that inter-island airlines may refuse to allow you onto a flight to either island unless you already have the required return ticket to use at the end of your trip, even if you plan to visit other islands before going home.

Specific entry regulations are covered under "Getting to Dominica" and "Getting to St. Lucia." Verify requirements before departure with your airline or the island's tourist bureau.

Immigration officers may also ask where you will be staying to insure that you have legitimate intentions. Be prepared to give an address, even if your plans are uncertain. You may be asked how long you will be on the island, and the exact number of days or the departure date will be stamped on your entry card. Buffer your expected departure date to allow for a change of plans, and if you do prolong your stay, apply for an extension at the immigration office or police station.

A current passport will speed you through customs, but US and Canadian citizens staying for short periods may present valid picture identification, such as a driver's license. Visas are not required for citizens of the US, Canada, Commonwealth Countries, or where there is an agreement for exemption between the home country and the island nations.

Other Documents

If you plan to rent a car, bring a valid driver's license from home. Unless you have an International Driving Permit, you also will be required to purchase a short-term local license.

Divers must present their certification card in order to rent scuba equipment and participate in guided dives.

Students and teachers may qualify for discounts on transportation and entrance fees, so carry an ID from your school or university. Members of certain organizations such as AARP and AAA should carry their cards and remember to ask about discounts when booking lodging, car rentals, and tours.

Don't leave home without your health insurance card. If your policy doesn't cover medical costs outside your country, consider purchasing a separate policy for your trip. Many tourists routinely buy travel insurance to cover theft, losses, and medical emergencies. Be aware of exclusions listed in fine print, and consider paying extra for emergency airlift coverage in case of serious illness or injury.

Information about island-issued driving permits is found under "Getting Around" in individual island chapters.

Departure Tax

Don't get caught at the airport without your departure tax. Plan to have the exact amount in Eastern Caribbean dollars to prevent delays and avoid receiving change in local currency. Dominica's departure tax is EC$50. St. Lucia's is EC$54.

Health & Safety

Dominica and Saint Lucia have low crime rates and few health dangers, but commonsense precautions are necessary.

- Drink only bottled water. While tap water is generally safe on all the islands, bottled water is easy to find, so why take a chance?
- Eat in clean restaurants with a heavy tourist trade. But keep in mind that some of the best meals are found in small family-run cafés in areas without many tourists. If the locals eat there, or recommend that you do, it's probably OK.
- Avoid raw fish, undercooked meats and eggs, and foods that have been sitting on the buffet table too long.
- Research shows that chewing a couple of Pepto-Bismol tablets before every meal may prevent travelers' diarrhea. A short-term course of preventive treatment probably won't hurt you (unless you're allergic to aspirin products or take blood-thinning medication), but check with your doctor before you leave home.
- If you bring medications with you, leave them in their original container. Customs agents get nervous when they see loose pills inside luggage.
- Bring high-SPF waterproof sun block. The Caribbean sun is strong year-round, and you may not notice that you're burning if a cool wind is blowing or there's a cloud cover.
- Don't touch anything in the ocean or on land unless you know for certain what it is. Some

The new pre-tan products (different from no-sun tanning lotions) prepare your skin with extra melanin to help you tan instead of burn your first time out.

of the most beautiful sea creatures and wild vegetation cause nasty rashes and painful abrasions.

Warning

Manchineel trees are particularly troublesome because the fruit, leaves, and sap are poisonous and cause severe skin blisters. Never stand under one during a rain storm, because sap can wash off the tree and onto you.

Bugs are a part of the Caribbean, especially in dense forests and around lakes. You probably won't be bothered when a breeze is blowing or in open areas during daytime, but remember that insects are drawn to sweet smells such as perfume. Wear lightweight long-sleeve tops and long pants when you hike into wooded areas. If you want extra protection, use a bug repellent containing DEET. Some people have good results with various natural repellents. Vitamin B-1 (thiamine), in 100 mg. tablets taken up to three times daily, is said to cause an odor on the skin that humans can't detect and insects detest. Bugs also hate the smell of chlorine, so frequent dips in the hotel pool might be a good idea.

Manchineel trees have round, shiny green leaves and fruit like a small, green apple. Those in public areas are usually marked with red paint, but be cautious in secluded spots.

Going Metric - Quick & Painless

Temperature

Temperature is converted from °C to °F by multiplying the Celsius temperature by nine, dividing the result by five and adding 32.

Too hard? Here's about all you need to know in the Caribbean:

15°C = 59°F 20°C = 68°F

25°C = 77°F 30°C = 86°F

35°C = 95°F

Pounds vs. Kilos

At the market, if you want to buy a pound of fruit, ask for half a kilo. Need more or less? You do the math:

1 kilogram = 2.2046 pounds

1 pound = 0.4536 kilograms

On the Road

The distance from one town to the next may be 10 kilometers, but that's only a little over six miles. When you buy gas, you'll need almost four liters to make a gallon. The numbers work out this way:

1 liter = 1.06 quarts or 0.264 gallons

3.8 liters = 4 quarts or one gallon

1.6 kilometers = 1 mile

Customs Regulations

Be sure to keep receipts for everything you buy while on vacation. When you return home, you'll be required to list all purchases that you are bringing back, and you may be asked to show customs officials what you bought.

US citizens who have been out of the country for at least 48-hours and haven't claimed an exemption allowance within the past 30 days are allowed to bring home $600 worth of tax-free goods from Dominica and St. Lucia. Both islands are granted higher than standard exemptions ($400) because they are part of the 27-country Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI).

When you visit a CBI island and a non-CBI island on the same trip, you qualify for $600 in exemptions, but only $400 may be from the non-CBI island. You can avoid the hassle of figuring out this formula by simply keeping your purchases within the $400 limit. However, if you think you might exceed the standard exemption or want more information on regulations, call the US Customs Service, ☎ 202-927-6724; www.customs.ustreas.gov/travel.

US residents over the age of 21 are allowed to include two liters of alcoholic beverages in the $600 exemption, as long as one of the liters was produced in a CBI country. Citizens may also bring in 200 cigarettes or cigars – but not from Cuba. Antiques more than 100 years old get in duty-free, and you won't be taxed on original art if it's done entirely by hand. However, the machine-made frame that holds the art may be taxed if its value exceeds the exemption allowance.

In addition, you may mail up to $200 worth of goods to yourself or someone else duty-free. This is a liberal exemption that applies to one package per address per

day. Just label the parcel "Personal Use," and don't try to sneak in alcohol, tobacco, or perfume worth more than five dollars. Mailed purchases do not reduce your duty-free allowance when you return home.

If you are traveling by air or sea, you may be asked to fill out a Customs Declaration Form, which is usually provided by the airline or cruise ship.

Clear Customs & Immigration Quickly

- Complete the Customs Declaration Form before landing or docking back in the US.
- Have your passport and other forms ready to present to officials.
- Keep sales receipts together in a convenient location.
- Pack purchases that must be declared separately.
- Follow signs posted in the arrival area.

Adult citizens of the **United Kingdom** may bring back the following duty-free purchases:

- 200 cigarettes, or 100 cigarillos, or 50 cigars, or 250 gms of tobacco.
- 2 liters of still table wine.
- 1 liter of spirits or strong liqueurs over 22% volume, or 2 liters of fortified wine, sparkling wine or other liqueurs.
- 60cc/ml perfume.
- 250 cc/ml toilet water.

- £145 worth of all other goods including gifts and souvenirs.

For additional information, contact the HM Customs and Excise Office, ☎ 020-7202-4227, fax 020-7202-4216 (in the UK); ☎ +44-171-202-4227, fax +44-171-202-4216 (outside the UK); www.hmce.gov.uk/public/travel/index.

TIP

UK citizens under the age of 17 may not bring home tobacco or alcoholic products. Items valued at more than the allowed limit are taxed on the full value, not just the value above £145. Families and groups may not pool their allowances toward an item worth more than £145.

Adult citizens of **Canada** (the legal age may vary by province or territory) may bring back C$200 worth of goods after being outside the country for 48 hours. After seven days, the duty and tax free exemption increases to C$750. Restrictions of individual provinces and territories vary, but in general, the exemption includes:

All tobacco products and alcoholic beverages must be brought into the country in the individual's hand- or checked luggage.

- 200 cigarettes, and 50 cigars or cigarillos, and 200 grams of manufactured tobacco.
- 1.5 liters of wine, or 1.14 liters of liquor, or 24 × 355 ml cans/bottles (8.5 liters) of beer or ale.

Canadian citizens also may mail duty- and tax-free gifts to friends in Canada. Allowable gifts must be worth C$60 or less and can not be alcohol or tobacco products or advertising material.

Customs regulations can be confusing. Verify all restrictions and regulations before you leave home to avoid delays and unexpected expense when you return.

For more information, contact Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, ☎ 613-993-0534, fax 613-954-3577; www.ccra-adrc.gc.ca/customs/individuals/travellers/menu-e.

TIP

A duty-free shop is one that has not paid import duties on the merchandise it is selling. This may mean that the item is less expensive than if you bought it in a regular store. However, when you return home, purchases from duty-free shops must be listed, and are subject to US Customs duties if they exceed the allowed exemptions.

Electricity

Electricity on Dominica and St. Lucia is 220 volts AC, 50 cycles. Many hotel bathrooms have outlets for 110-volt shavers, but you'll need voltage converters and plug adapters to run small grooming appliances and computers designed to run at other powers. Even dual-voltage computers and appliances may need a plug adapter, depending on which country it was sold in. Conversion devices are relatively inexpensive, so you may want to pick up a set at a travel store or electrical shop before you leave home.

Time Zones

Dominica and St. Lucia are on Atlantic Standard Time, which is one hour ahead of Eastern Standard Time. Since the islands do not observe daylight-saving time, they are on the same time as the eastern United States during the summer.

Dominica

Overview

Even travelers familiar with the Caribbean often confuse the Commonwealth of Dominica with the Dominican Republic, so when you tell someone your vacation plans, be prepared to give a quick geography lesson. It helps if you pronounce the name correctly – say Dom-en-EE-ka. The Dominican Republic is a Spanish-speaking country that shares a big island with Haiti near Puerto Rico. Dominica is a smaller English-speaking island farther south between the French islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique.

Unspoiled nature runs rampant on Dominica – a mating of Jurassic Park with the Garden of Eden. Clean rivers lead to isolated waterfalls in the lush rain forest that covers the rugged mountains of the interior. Spectacular coral reefs growing on underwater volcanoes surround the coast. It is so untouched that scientists consider it a laboratory of 10,000-year-old plant life.

About 75% of the island is covered by thickly wooded mountains, and more than a quarter of it is protected as national parks or forest reserves. Most visitors who come here consider themselves eco-tourists, explorers, or adventurers, and they are exactly the type of non-traditional tourist Dominica strives to please.

The Dominican government holds a tight rein on development, so glamour and glitz are neither solicited nor welcome. Casinos, nightclubs, luxury stores and high-rise hotels do not exist here, and officials are do-

ing everything possible to prevent their arrival. Don't mistake this intentional refusal to court tourism at the expense of natural assets for third-world backwardness. The island has all the latest conveniences: cable television, computers and cellular phones. However, the emphasis is on nature, and the islanders willingly do without things that can harm the environment, including tourists. Islanders won't clear the forest or surrender the waterfront for extravagant resorts, and this blatant snub of mass tourism is precisely what makes the island so attractive.

The island is beautiful beyond description, rich in culture, overflowing with natural attractions, and home to some of the friendliest people in the Caribbean.

Mountains run north-south through the center of the Dominica, reaching 5,000 feet. More than 300 inches of rain fall throughout the central region, creating a magnificent ecosystem. The coast is mostly rocky, but there are some sand beaches, and close-in reefs and old shipwrecks provide excellent dive sites.

These are qualities not easily kept secret. Since the mid-1990s, visits from cruise ship passengers have doubled, and the number of tourists from the US has increased more than 25%. Obviously, change is afoot.

Plans are in the works for paved walkways, toilets and visitors' centers at some of the waterfalls. Melville Hall Airport is expected to expand to accommodate jumbo jets and night landings. Developers hope to add 3,000 hotel rooms over the next few years. A cable car may soon haul out-of-shape tourists to summits that are now the private retreat of long-distance hikers.

The message: Visit now.

Most of the island's best attractions can be reached by car, and hiking trails lead to others. Some of the most

popular sites are: the waterfalls at the **Emerald Pool**, **Trafalgar**, **Sari Sari** and **Victoria**; the craft shops in **Carib Territory**, where a large community of indigenous people make their home; the world's largest **Boiling Lake** in the **Valley of Desolation**; and the remaining buildings at **Fort Shirley**, overlooking the ocean from **Cabrits National Park**.

Roseau, near Canefield Airport on the southwest coast, is the capital and largest town on the island. **Portsmouth**, on the northwest coast, is the second largest town and was originally intended as the capital because of its attractive natural harbor. Most of Dominica's accommodations and many of its remarkable highlights are located between the two towns along the west coast.

A high ridge of mountains runs north/south through the center of the island, and the lofty **Transinsular Road** cuts east/west across them to connect the western Caribbean coast with the sparsely populated eastern Atlantic shoreline. **Carib Territory**, on the Atlantic side just north of the beautiful bay at **Castle Bruce**, is an interesting spot when seen with a knowledgeable guide. Nearby, the waterfalls of the **Crayfish River** cascade into rocky pools then flow into the ocean. North and south along the eastern coast are ancient trails to hike, old aqueducts and geological formations to explore, and deserted spots with fantastic views to enjoy.

On the southern tip of Dominica, **Scotts Head** is a bustling center of laid-back activity – a true beachlover's village. It backs up to mountains and the sandy coast drops off into an underwater volcano in **Soufrière Bay.** There's a fabulous view from the top of a promontory at the often-photographed southern tip of the bay.

Offshore, whales and dolphins follow boats through calm Caribbean waters, and prizewinning blue marlin can be caught from close-in deep-sea fishing sites. The underwater world is as spectacular and untouched as the island itself. Undefiled reefs, dramatic pinnacles and ancient shipwrecks provide divers a world-class experience. Visibility is usually more than 100 feet, and many sites can be explored with a mask and snorkel.

Even though Dominica is only 29 miles long and 16 miles wide, it can't be seen quickly because of the rough terrain, narrow roads and mountain barriers. The best way to take in all the sites is to take day-trips to different areas from a homebase anywhere along the west coast.

Island Manners

Residents are wonderfully good-natured and friendly, but usually wait for you to start conversing. Be sure to say good morning or hello when you pass anyone on the street. Always offer a greeting before you ask a question and never take someone's picture without permission. Dominicans respond warmly to these courtesies, and you'll be rewarded with genuine smiles and eager cooperation.

A Brief History

Dominica's history is similar to its French neighbors', Guadeloupe and Martinique, with one significant difference – the British held power until the island became an independent republic. Along the

way, there were enough tangles and takeovers to give the new nation a riveting cultural twist.

Early Residents

Dominica's first residents were from South America. First were an ancient tribe of Ortoiroids, who lived on the island about 5,000 years ago and vanished without leaving much of a mark. They were followed by the Arawaks, who worked their way up the Antilles and arrived on Dominica around 2,000 years ago. They were a peaceful group of artists and craftsmen who left remnants of elaborately decorated pottery as proof of their existence.

About 1000 AD, groups of South American warrior-tribes stormed ashore demanding land and conquering the Arawaks. These people, which we now call Caribs, built villages controlled by chiefs and obtained food by hunting and fishing. In their native language, they called their new home *Wai'tukubuli,* which meant "tall is her body," and referred to the island's towering mountains that jut steeply out of the ocean.

Christopher Columbus

Columbus sighted these magnificent mountains when he circled Wai'tukubuli with a 17-ship armada in 1493. Since it was Sunday morning, he called the island *Dominica* (Latin for the Lord's day) and wrote in his logbook: "Dominica is remarkable for the beauty of its mountains... and must be seen to be believed." Columbus himself didn't land on Dominica, although some of his men anchored off the leeward side and reported finding people and huts. Over the next century, various European expeditions visited or passed

by the island, mentioning its outstanding beauty in their diaries. The first settlers didn't arrive until 1632.

Europeans

French colonists came to Dominica about the same time that they began settling on Guadeloupe and Martinique. However, the English also wanted a presence in the Lesser Antilles, and the two countries battled over the islands for many years. In addition to struggling with one another, the Europeans had to contend with the Caribs, who were reported to enslave or cannibalize their victims. Constant battles with increasingly larger European troops gradually drove the Caribs inland and subdued their aggression.

After decades of back-and-forth agreements and precarious control, Britain was granted rights to Dominica in the Treaty of Paris in 1763. Within a decade, they had surveyed all the land, established towns, brought in slaves from Africa to work the plantations, opened free ports and elected officials. The French continued to be an important part of island life, and vied for political power at every opportunity. In 1778, while the English were distracted by the American Revolution, French troops seized the island and remained in control until the Treaty of Versailles returned British rule in 1783.

Napoleon, always looking for a place to stir up trouble, invaded Dominica in 1805. His troops burned the capital city and held government officials hostage while attempting to establish control. After several days, the French forces agreed to accept a large bribe to leave the island, and the British resumed business as usual, which included dealing with civil unrest.

Slavery & The Maroons

For years, Dominica had been a refuge for escaped slaves called Maroons. Some fled from local plantations, but large numbers of them came from neighboring islands. Dominica's dense, mountainous forest provided the perfect hideout for the slaves who formed guerrilla armies for protection. While the French and English fought each other, they also had to fight off attacks from the Maroons, who had the advantage of escaping into the forest if a battle got rough. When France declared a brief end to slavery on their islands from 1794 until 1802, Maroons joined French forces and French whites supported Maroon guerrilla raids in a united front against English plantation owners and the British militia. Finally, in 1814, the Maroons were overwhelmed by British troops, and their leaders were publicly executed. But by this time coffee and sugar production was low and export was almost nonexistent. When all slaves were freed in 1834, Dominica was in a deep economic depression and traditional plantations were struggling.

Independence

Conditions were right for the emergence of a new middle class. During the last years of the 19th century, Dominica became a modern farming and fishing community. Limes and cocoa were among the first new industries, followed by a thriving banana boom. Foreign investment and aid allowed improvement in public services and a sturdy infrastructure developed.

Gradually, Dominica took steps to become autonomous. It became a self-governing British possession in 1967, and all foreign ties were cut in 1978 when the island became an independent republic. Today, the gov-

ernment is headed by a president – elected by the House of Assembly – and a prime minister, who leads the Cabinet of Ministers. A general election is held every five years.

Culturally, Dominica is the result of its past – totally free and independent, but deeply affected by the history that made it so. The cuisine tends to be Créole, with unequivocal French twists. Streets and villages are named a jumble of English and French words, but most residents are descendants of African slaves and speak a West Indian patois. The island is also home to the only remaining community of Caribs, descended directly from original South American tribes. Their reservation, Carib Territory, covers 3,700 acres on the eastern coast, and their traditions are evident islandwide.

Getting to Dominica

Documentation

The area code for Dominica is 767.

Citizens of the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada may visit Dominica for up to six months by presenting a return or onward ticket off the island and some form of official photo ID, such as a valid drivers license. Visitors from France may present a Carte d'Identité for visits of up to two weeks. Visitors from other countries must present a valid passport in addition to a return or onward ticket. Since laws may change, obtain current regulations from a knowledgeable travel agent or the Consulate of the Commonwealth of Dominica, ☎ 212-599-8478.

Arrival By Air

It's odd that an island as small as Dominica has two airports: **Melville Hall** (DOM; ☎ 445-7100) on the northeast coast, and **Canefield** (DCF; ☎ 449-1199) on the west coast. It's even stranger that Melville Hall, miles from anywhere, is the major airport receiving most flights, while Canefield, just a five-minute drive from the capital city, takes in only flights from nearby islands. Neither airport has a runway long enough to accommodate standard jets, but plans are underway to expand Melville Hall so that it can receive jumbos.

A travel agent familiar with the Caribbean can set up the best connections for you.

Despite the lack of jet service, getting to Dominica is relatively easy. Several airlines fly from North America, the UK and Europe to San Juan, Puerto Rico. From there, regional airlines fly turboprops to Melville Hall. While this is often the simplest option, you may be able to find less expensive or more convenient alternatives.

One possibility is to take a flight to Antigua, Saint Maarten, or Barbados, then continue on Dominican-run Cardinal Airlines into Canefield Airport. This will put you closer to your hotel, since most accommodations are along the east coast.

Whitchurch Travel, ☎ 448-2181, handles ticketing for Dominica on several airlines.

Air Canada, Air France, British Airways, Lufthansa, Continental, BWIA and American offer the most flights from North America, the UK and Europe to Dominica's gateways in the Caribbean.

Check with inter-island carriers to see if they allow free stopovers on Dominica when you fly between two other Caribbean destinations. For example, LIAT permits passengers to stay on Dominica up to 30 days when they book a flight from Antigua to Martinique. Simply get off when the plane makes an intermediary

stop, then continue to your next destination at a later time.

Inter-island airlines that serve Dominica include: **Carib Express**, flying small jets from Barbados, Grenada, Saint Lucia (Vegie Airport), Saint Vincent and Tobago into Melville Hall; **LIAT**, offering flights from most islands including Antigua, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Puerto Rico, Saint Lucia and Saint Maarten into both Canefield and Melville Hall; **Air Guadeloupe** and **Air Martinique**, each flying from their home island; **Helenair**, with flights from Saint Lucia to Canefield; and **American Eagle**, providing flights from San Juan.

The area code for Dominica is 767.

AIRLINE INFORMATION	
Air Canada	☎ 888-247-2262 (in the US and Canada); www.aircanada.ca
Air France	☎ 800-237-2747 (in the US); 800-667-2747 (in Canada); www.airfrance.com
Air Jamaica	☎ 800-523-5585 (in North America); 876-922-3460 (on Jamaica); (44) 020-8570-9171 (in the UK); www.airjamaica.com
Air Guadeloupe	☎ 448-2181; fax 448-5787 (Whitchurch Travel)
Air Martinique	☎ 448-2181; fax 448-5787 (Whitchurch Travel)
American Airlines/ American Eagle	☎ 800-433-7300 (in the US); 448-0628 (on Dominica); www.aa.com
BWIA	☎ 888-853-8560 (in North America); +44-181-577-1100 (in the UK and Europe); 800-744-2942 (in the Caribbean); www.bwee.com
British Airways	☎ +44-845-773-3377 (in the UK); www.british-airways.com
Helenair	☎ 448-2181; e-mail helenair@candw.lc
LIAT	☎ 800-468-0482 (in North America); 448-2422 (on Dominica); 268-480-5601 (on Antigua, headquarters)

Arrival By Sea

If you're island-hopping, consider traveling to Dominica by ferry from neighboring islands. **L'Express des Iles** (☎ 2181) operates regular service between the capital city of Roseau and the islands of Guadeloupe, Martinique and Saint Lucia on 300-passenger catamarans. The Guadeloupe and Martinique trips take about 90 minutes, but the weekends-only voyage to Saint Lucia is 3½ hours. One-way fares are about $40 to Guadeloupe, $45 to Martinique, and $59 to Saint Lucia.

Whitchurch Travel, ☎ 767-448-2181; fax 767-448-5787, offers reservations and ferry information. www.whitchurch.com. E-mail hhvwhitchurch@cwdom.dm.

Atlantica serves Guadeloupe and Martinique. Contact the **Trois Pitons Travel Agency** for information and schedules. ☎ 448-6219.

Most cruise ships dock either at the new pier in the center of Roseau or on the northwestern coast at Cabrits National Park. Both are ideal locations since passengers can walk to many attractions. A few ships come into Woodbridge Bay, the commercial deep-water port north of Roseau; passengers are shuttled into town.

Tourist offices near all three ports are open when ships arrive to help passengers plan their sightseeing tours.

Private boats may not anchor in the marine reserves at Scotts Head/Soufrière and Douglas Bay. Do not interfere with fishing operations anywhere near the island. Facilities for boaters are located at Castaways Beach Hotel near Salisbury.

Everyone over the age of 12 who has been on the island more than 24 hours is charged US$14 or EC$34 when they leave the island.

Getting Around

Car Rentals

Only the Canefield Airport has rental cars on-site, with Avis. Other companies will meet your plane at either airport or deliver a car to your hotel.

If you're confident that you can handle driving steep, narrow, winding roads on the *wrong* side, there's no better way to experience the island. (Keep in mind that most rental cars have manual transmission and right-side drive, so you'll be shifting on mountain roads with your left hand.) The speed limit in towns and villages is 20 mph, and while there is no posted speed limit in the countryside, narrow roads and frequent curves require drivers to maintain a slow speed at all times.

A local driving permit is required. Some companies issue them on-site when you pick up your car, but you also can obtain one from Immigration at either airport or from the traffic department on High Street in downtown Roseau (open 8:30 am to 3 pm, Monday through Friday; closed for lunch between 1 and 2 pm). Visiting drivers must be between 25 and 65 years old with a valid driver's license and at least two years of driving experience. The permit fee is US$12.

Most roads on Dominica are narrow, but the primary routes are in good condition. Secondary roads tend to have potholes and an occasional fallen tree limb, but rarely become unmanageable. A four-wheel-drive is a great convenience on much of the island and a must in remote areas. Gas stations are only in the larger villages, but the island is so small, you're never far from a fill-up.

WARNING

A word of caution from a resident (who happened to be hitchhiking at the moment): "Don't pick up hitchhikers. Some of dem got bad habits."

CAR RENTAL COMPANIES	
North American Companies	
Avis	☎ 800-331-1084; 448-0413: fax 448-6681 (on Dominica)
Budget	☎ 800-472-3325; 449-2080; fax 449-2694 (on Dominica)
Local Companies	
Atlantic	☎ 445-8307 (phone/fax); e-mail atlantic@cwdom.dm
Auto Rentals	☎ 448-3425
Best Deal	☎ 449-9204; fax 449-9207; e-mail bestdeal@cwdom.dm
Bonus	☎ 448-2650; fax 448-6050; e-mail cphillip@cwdom.dm
Garraway	☎ 448-2891; fax 448-0541; e-mail garrawaye@cwdom.dm
Island (Fly/Drive Dominica)	☎ 448-2886; fax448-0737; e-mail autotrade@cwdom.dm
Valley Rent-a-Car	☎ 448-3233; fax 448-6009; www.valleycarrentals.com; e-mail valley@cwdom.dm.

Boats

A coastwide permit (EC$1) is required for movement of craft from one location to another. Obtain a permit from main Customs office at the harbor at Woodbridge Bay, ☎ 448-4462. Designated ports of entry are Portsmouth and Roseau on the west coast and Anse Du Mai on the east coast.

Permits are required for sportfishing & scuba diving off the coast.

Buses

The island's bus system is either terrific or terrible, depending on your mood and general outlook on life. Buses are actually privately owned minivans that stop at red road signs – or wherever they want... maybe.

Buses are not to be relied upon at night, on Sundays, or in remote areas.

They are filled – usually to overflowing – with school kids, laborers and women loaded down with shopping bags. You get up-close-and-personal with the locals while zooming around hairpin bends on narrow mountain roads, accompanied by booming reggae music. It's a great way to bond with friendly, fearless people. You can hop on a bus at the Old Market in Roseau and go south to Scotts Head for about $1 and change. A trip north to Carib Territory or Portsmouth will cost less than $3. Check the schedule posted at Old Market Plaza, any tourist office, or your hotel for bus stop locations and frequency of service. Then, be flexible and consider the experience an inexpensive island adventure.

Taxis

Negotiate and confirm the fare before you get into the cab.

You should tip your driver at least 10% for just getting the job done and more for doing it well.

Taxis meet cruise ships and airplanes when they arrive on the island. Rates are controlled by the government. Drivers are allowed to charge per person, and may carry four passengers in a car and up to 15 in a van. If you prefer a private taxi, be prepared to pay extra – possibly the total of the per-seat rates.

It's a fair way from Melville Hall airport to the major towns. Count on $18 per person to Roseau and $12 to Portsmouth via the Transinsular Road. Some drivers may try to take the longer coastal roads and charge more, so agree on the route before you leave the air-

port. Canefield Airport is near Roseau, and a private taxi ride into town runs about $8 to $10 per person.

Taxis are also available for sightseeing tours at a rate of about $18 per hour, per car, for up to four passengers. Some taxi drivers are excellent guides and will take you to places not commonly seen on organized group tours. However, request the name of a knowledgeable driver from your hotel or the tourist office, be sure that he speaks English clearly, and go over your expectations and his fees before you set out. Companies to try include **Mally's Tour and Taxi Service**, ☎ 448-3114 or 448-3360, fax 448-3689; and Ken's Tours and Taxi, ☎ 448-4850..

Call a taxi through the Dominica Taxi Association: ☎ 767-449-8533.

TIP

Drivers usually accept US dollars as well as Eastern Caribbean dollars (EC). Make sure you know which you are dealing in.

Festivals, Events & Holidays

A distinct culture made up of eclectic-Créole and historic-Carib traditions is wonderfully conspicuous and delightfully celebrated on Dominica. At every opportunity, the inherently jovial people dress up in costumes and come out into the streets to dance, sing and parade. All festivities include plenty of island-made food and drink, and visitors are welcome to join in. Since most villages commemorate feast days for their patron saints, and several island-wide events

take place every year, it's likely your visit will coincide with some cause for revelry.

For a complete list and exact dates of this year's special events, contact the **Dominica Festivals Commission**, ☎ 448-4833; fax 448-0229; or the **National Development Corporation**, ☎ 448-2045; fax 448-5840; e-mail ndctourism@tod.dm.

Major Annual Events

Carnival or Mas Dominik

Carnival is the biggest festival of the year. Officially, the Carnival days are the Monday and Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, but partying begins at least two weeks earlier with music concerts, dance shows and elections for the Carnival king and queen. Carnival on Dominica is less commercialized than on other islands, but it is no less lively. Programs feature a unique mix of English/French Catholic traditions with African rituals and indigenous Carib customs to create an event that is truly original.

The opening parade is one of the most popular attractions of Carnival, and thousands of onlookers gather to watch the bands, cheerleaders and floats on display. Islanders often dress in colorful Sensay costumes to signify their African heritage, and the streets boom with the drum-heavy sound of Créole music and patois. As Ash Wednesday approaches, Carnival winds down with two nonstop days of street parties.

TIP

Check out www.sensay.com for music, videos, pictures and information on Carnival and other Dominican events.

Sensay Costumes

A recent revival of African tradition has increased the popularity of the Sensay costume. The main bodysuit is made of layered strips of brightly colored cloth, and makes the wearer look somewhat like Sesame Street's Big Bird. The costume also includes some type of freakish mask, usually with horns and a pointed beak-nose; a bonnet, cap or hat; and platform shoes that produce an altogether spectacular sight.

Independence Day

Dominicans celebrate independence as energetically as Carnival. The third of November – the island's equivalent of Fourth of July – has double meaning to the locals. This was the day their island was first sighted by Columbus in 1493. Dominica then became an independent republic on that date in 1978. Two excellent reasons to bring out the bands!

As with Carnival, all aspects of the mixed cultures are flaunted spiritedly throughout the island. Beginning in late October (Dominicans always like to get a head start on festivities), villages challenge each other in folklore, dance and music competitions. Everyone dresses up in their best traditional outfits for these

Most of the music heard is derived from Calypso.

Jingping gets its name from the sounds produced by street bands, who add a Caribbean beat to rap-style songs.

contests, and it's a great time to see the women and girls in bright madras hats and elaborately decorated petticoats under colorful skirts.

On the Friday before the third of November, the entire island observes **Créole Day**, a chance for everyone to wear national costumes, speak Créole (even the radio stations broadcast in the dialect), and eat spicy food. If you happen to be visiting during this time, try to learn a few Créole greetings (it helps to know French) and attend one of the fund-raising lunches hosted by a church or community group.

The hoopla peaks on Independence Day when jingping bands hit the streets with booming music, parties break out in every neighborhood, uniformed troops parade through the capital, local artists display their work, and everyone capable of standing upright is expected to do the polka. A bit of reason returns on **National Day of Community Service**, November 4, when all citizens turn out to complete approved community projects in a single day.

DOMFESTA

If you visit during June, you may come across undiscovered talent at The Dominica Festival of Creative Arts, DOMFESTA. Local performing and visual artists display their skills in a variety of presentations and workshops. Adults and children take part in events held in several villages as well as the capital. One of the most popular shows is the **Dance and Steel Festival**, where dancers, choreographers and steel bands put together solo, duet and group performances. In addition, there are concerts put on by the best community bands and orchestras, art exhibits and readings by Dominica's leading poets. DOMFESTA culminates with the **Golden Drum Award**

Ceremony, which pays tribute to Caribbean talent and creativity.

Dive Fest

You don't have to be a scuba diver to have a great time at Dive Fest. The festival is sponsored by The Dominican Watersports Association in July, and special events are held island-wide. If you're a certified diver, you can participate in organized group dives to some of the most pristine underwater sites in the world. If you're not certified, but think you might like to try diving, you can join a Discover SCUBA group for a free introduction from the experts.

In addition, there are snorkeling lessons and tours; kayaking and canoeing lessons, races and tours; swimming competitions; whale- and dolphin-watching tours aboard glass-bottom boats; deep-sea fishing excursions; and dinner cruises. In the evenings, everyone gets together for happy hours, buffet dinners, steel-band shows and dancing. On the final night, a grand finale party takes place on the beach at Scotts Head.

World Créole Music Festival

Dominica is quickly becoming known as a stage for Créole music from around the world. The first World Créole Music Festival took place on the island in 1997 and was so successful (bands played and fans stayed until dawn), it has been scheduled annually ever since. All types of Créole-style music are featured, including cadence-lypso, compas, zouk, bouyon and soukous.

If you're a music enthusiast, plan to visit during this festival. It's a tremendous opportunity to see some of

the best Créole musicians in the world play a mix of their most popular songs. Even people who arrive without a clue about the latest wave in soul-jarring, heart-pounding Créole beats often stay late into the night having the time of their lives.

Créole Music Defined

If you don't know *zouk* about Zydeco, look over the following terms before you visit the islands.

Cadence-lypso started in the mid-1970s when Dominican musician Gordon Henderson and his band, Exile One, mixed calypso with a Haitian sound called **compas** and the US music known as **funk**. This new beat revived worldwide interest in Créole music and caused a wave of original sounds to pour out of the Caribbean and South America.

Calypso was started by slaves in Trinidad in the 18th century as a way to entertain themselves while they worked. The lyrics were sung in patois so the white masters couldn't understand them. Although modern songs are usually sung in English, the words still mock society with jabs at politics and sex. Calypso competitions are a standard part of Carnival.

Rapso combines calypso and rap.

Chutney combines calypso with the traditional sounds of music from India.

Soca puts soul into calypso to create a heavy-on-the-bass sound which originated in Trinidad in the 1970s.

Steel Pan came out of Trinidad in the 1940s when the bottoms of old steel oil drums were hammered out to create drums with various pitches. This music is instantly associated with the islands, and steel-pan

drummers play on beaches, street corners and resort terraces throughout the Caribbean.

Pan Jazz is a fairly recent mixing of jazz and steel pan.

Biguine/beguine became popular in the 1930s when the exciting Afro-French bolero dance rhythm was created on Martinique.

Kadans is the Créole spelling of a music genre that mixes calypso, mazouk and beguine. Kadans rampa and kadans dous are two types of kadans.

Zouk has been affected by worldwide music styles, including Latin American salsa and mambo, Haitian cadence, African soukous, and North American funk. It has been called an Afro-Caribbean mix tempered by Euro-Western influence.

Soukous comes from the African Congo and has a forceful bass, rapid rhythm, and quick guitar sounds.

Ska came out of Jamaica in the 1950. It combines calypso with blues and African folk songs.

Reggae was made popular by Bob Marley, who mixed ska with calypso and rock. The lyrics usually have a social message and the beat is infectious.

Bouyon is the newest music to come out of the Caribbean. It was started by a Dominica-based band known as Windward Caribbean Kulture, or WCK, and features electronically-generated sounds with pounding drums and a prominent keyboard.

Compas comes from Haiti's national dance music, which is also called Konpa, Con Pah or Kompas. This is an easily recognized sound with a beat that makes feet move involuntarily. Lyrics are sung in Spanish, French, English or Créole.

Meringue is the dance music from the Dominican Republic that recently became a worldwide sensation. Since Haiti and the Dominican Republic share the island of Hispaniola, compas and meringue have a lot in common.

Rara, another popular dance music from Haiti, has a mesmerizing drum beat taken from traditional voodoo rituals.

Funk. Well you know what funk is – it's the United States' soul-age contribution to world music.

Zydeco. Zydeco is a popular accordion-based musical genre hailing from the prairies of Louisiana. Contrary to popular belief, it is not Cajun in origin; rather, zydeco is the music of south Louisiana's Créoles of Color, who borrowed many of zydeco's defining elements from Cajun music. (In turn, Cajun music borrowed many of its traits from Créole music.)

If you still can't grasp the differences, don't worry... be happy. Just know that when you hear music with a rich beat that sends a message from the very roots of the earth and causes your hips to sway involuntarily, it's called Créole.

Public Holidays

Banks and most businesses are closed on these days:

January 1 . . . . . New Year's Day
May 1 . . . . . May Day
First Monday in August . . . . . August Monday
November 3 . . . . . Independence Day
November 4 . . . . . Community Service Day
December 25 . . . . . Christmas Day
December 26 . . . . . Boxing Day

Variable religious holidays observed by public closings include Shrove Monday and Tuesday (for Carnival); Ash Wednesday; Good Friday; Easter Sunday and Monday; Whit Sunday and Monday (also known as Pentecost, the seventh Sunday/Monday after Easter).

Exploring the Island

Roseau

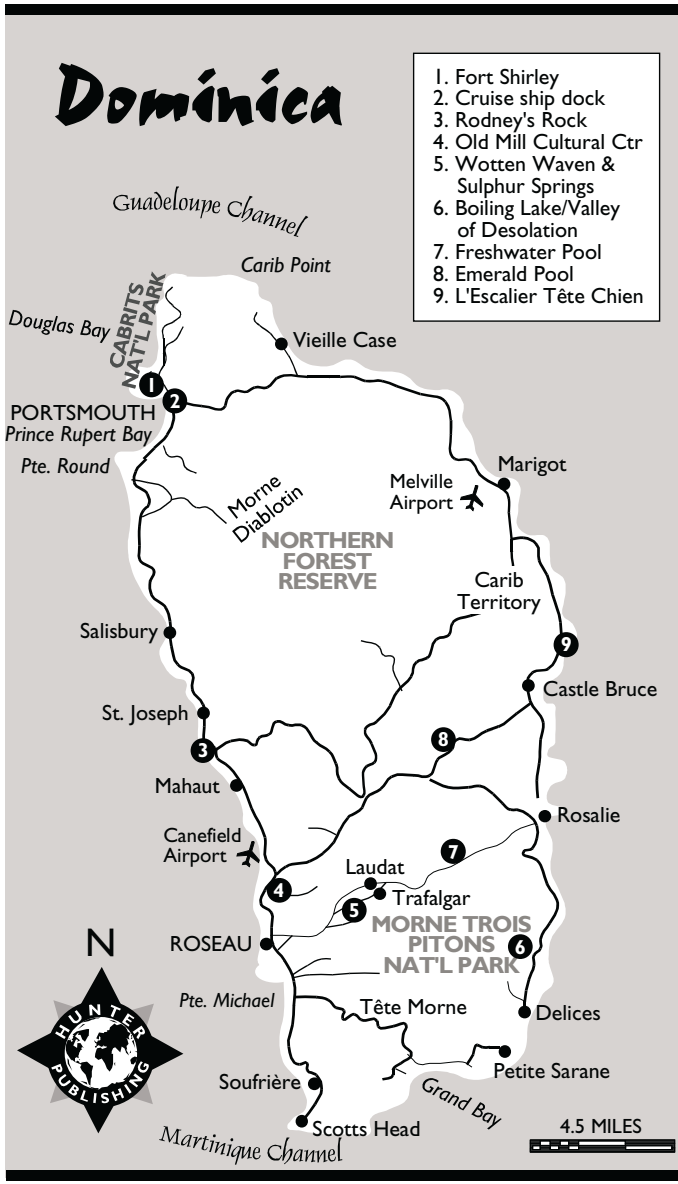
The capital city is a busy, pastel-colored oasis set down beside the Roseau River on a rare stretch of flat land at the foot of Morne Bruce, near the southern end of the west coast.

Old Market Square

Now called Dawbiney Market Plaza by those who can remember the new name, this is the center of activity. Tourist Information is dispensed from the original **Market House** here, which was built in 1810.

Bayfront

Hurricane David damaged much of the waterfront in 1979, and provided an ideal opportunity for the city to clean-up and update. A new seawall now reduces the chance of future storm damage, and land in front of it has been reclaimed, beautified, and given a snappy name – Bayfront. In addition, a new jetty provides facilities for small boats and ferries.


Dominica
1. Fort Shirley
2. Cruise ship dock
3. Rodney's Rock
4. Old Mill Cultural Ctr
5. Wotten Waven & Sulphur Springs
6. Boiling Lake/Valley of Desolation
7. Freshwater Pool
8. Emerald Pool
9. L'Escalier Tête Chien
Guadeloupe Channel
Carib Point
Douglas Bay
CABRITS NAT'L PARK
Vieille Case
PORTSMOUTH
Prince Rupert Bay
Pte. Round
Marigot
Melville Airport
Morne Diablotin
NORTHERN FOREST RESERVE
Carib Territory
Salisbury
Castle Bruce
St. Joseph
Mahaut
Rosalie
Canefield Airport
Laudat
Trafalgar
MORNE TROIS PITONS NAT'L PARK
N
ROSEAU
Pte. Michael
Tête Morne
Delices
Petite Sarane
Soufrière
Grand Bay
Scotts Head
Martinique Channel
4.5 MILES
HUNTER PUBLISHING

Old Market, New Market

Beyond the seawall, a new cruise-ship dock allows passengers to step directly from the ship into the bustle of the city. A noisy, jostling crowd cheerfully browses through crafts, T-shirts and island-made products at the Old Market across from the dock. A New Market, at the north end of Bayfront near the river, is a swarm of brightly dressed vendors and buyers hovering over produce spread on mats under multicolored umbrellas. There are also some permanent, covered stalls.

The best time to visit the New Market is on Friday & Saturday mornings. It's not open on Sundays.

Dominica Museum

The old post office, near Old Market Square, has been turned into the Dominica Museum, which tells the island's story through photographs, exhibits of Arawak pottery and tools, and a replica of a Carib hut. There's a good view of the town from the second-floor balcony.

The museum is open weekdays, 9 am-4 pm and Saturday, 9 am-noon. Admission is EC$2. ☎ 448-8923.

Fort Young

At the south end of Bayfront, Victoria Street climbs past Peebles Park to Fort Young and Saint George Anglican Church. Fort Young was built in 1770 by Sir William Young, the island's first British governor, and enlarged by the French between 1778 and 1783. Since 1964, it has been a hotel, and ongoing construction has repaired hurricane damage and added new rooms and facilities.

Saint George Anglican Church

Across the street, the Regency-style Saint George Anglican Church has suffered major damage from hurricanes since it was built in 1820. Hurricane David gutted the structure and it lost some of its architectural style when it was restored, but the gray-stone church is still worth seeing. If you can get inside, notice the wooden ceiling, stone floor and stained glass on the altar.

Next door, **State House** (called Government House on older maps) is surrounded by a garden. Before Dominica became an independent nation, the house was the residence and offices of the governor and is now used for state receptions and community affairs. The official-looking building to the south is the **House of Assembly**, constructed in 1811 in Georgian-colonial style on land where the island legislature has met since 1765.

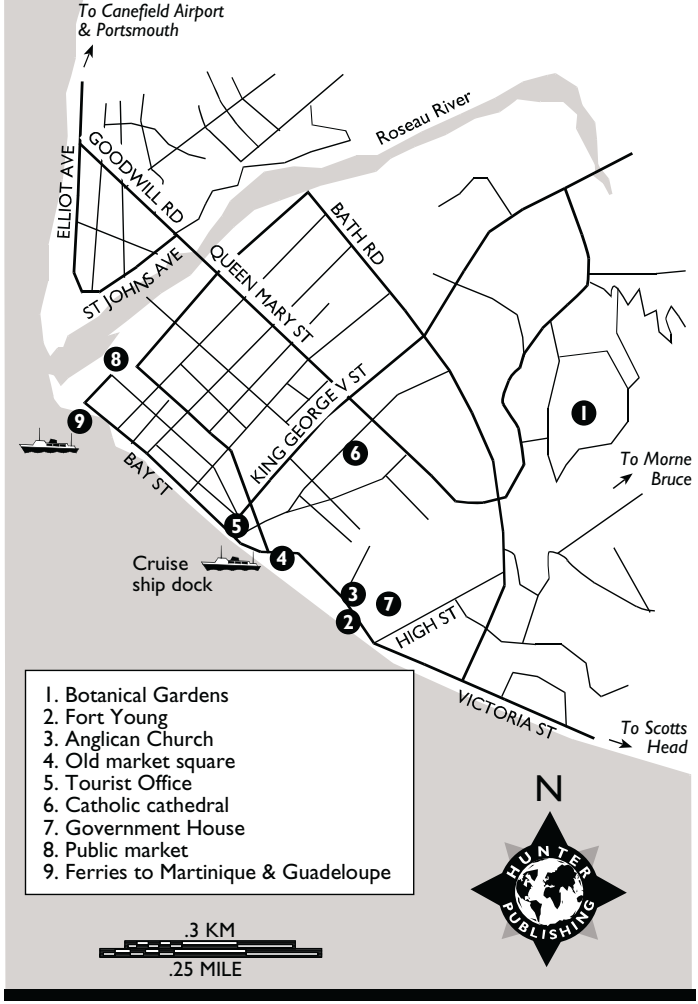
Botanical Gardens

A loop road going through the gardens allows traffic to enter from Bath Road as well as Trafalgar Road (an extension of King George V Street).

King George V Street, the major east/west road through town, is lined with balconied restaurants and shops. Find it off Bayfront, between the tourist office and Royal Bank of Canada, and follow it up toward Morne Bruce Hill to the Botanical Gardens.

This 40-acre garden planted on a former sugarcane field thrives on approximately 85 inches of rain each year. While some of the oldest vegetation has been destroyed by hurricanes, there are still 500 species of trees and plants to see. Take time to visit the aviary to view endangered jaco and sisserou parrots (they are bred in a research area behind the exhibition cages, but the lab is not open to the public), and get a reality

Roseau


To Canefield Airport & Portsmouth
Roseau River
ELLIOT AVE
GOODWILL RD
ST JOHNS AVE
QUEEN MARY ST
BATH RD
KING GEORGE V ST
BAY ST
HIGH ST
VICTORIA ST
To Morne Bruce
To Scotts Head
Cruise ship dock
1. Botanical Gardens
2. Fort Young
3. Anglican Church
4. Old market square
5. Tourist Office
6. Catholic cathedral
7. Government House
8. Public market
9. Ferries to Martinique & Guadeloupe
.3 KM
.25 MILE
N
HUNTER PUBLISHING

check at the monument to Hurricane David – a crushed school bus trapped under a giant baobab tree that was uprooted by the 1979 storm. There's no admission charge.

Churches

The **Cathedral of Our Lady of Fair Haven** is built on a hill next to the **Methodist Church** on Virgin Lane. The two churches are not particularly interesting unless you're a history or architecture buff, but the story that surrounds them is. In 1766, after the British took Dominica from the French, King George III granted the Catholics a 99-year lease on 10 acres of land on the hill above Roseau. A thatched hut church was built immediately, but it took more than 100 years for the Catholics to complete a cathedral constructed of cut volcanic stone in the Gothic-Romanesque Revival style.

When the 99-year lease ended, the Catholics asked for a freehold grant for the land on which their cathedral was built. The British readily approved the grant, but there was a complication. Two sections of the 10 acres had been sublet to parishioners who had converted to Methodism, and they had given the Wesleyan Methodist Mission permission to build on their two lots. For years, there was ecumenical unrest, but the two churches and their congregations are now friendly neighbors.

Of the two, the Catholic Cathedral is the most interesting. The windows are Gothic, with stained glass in the pointed upper arcs (one dedicated to Christopher Colombus). The pulpit was built by prisoners confined on Devil's Island, and there are Victorian murals behind the side altars. The structure was built in seg-

ments by islanders who worked on it at night after their day jobs ended.

Morne Bruce Hill

You can get a panoramic view of the town and the coast, all the way to Scotts Head, from Morne Bruce Hill. If you have a car, drive south on Bath Road, which is the western boundary of the Botanical Gardens; or amble up Jack's Walk, which begins near the aviary and the east entrance to the gardens and climbs steeply. At the top, in addition to a terrific view, you'll find a fine residential area and a couple of small inns.

Touring the Southern Tip

Roseau to Scotts Head and Loubiere to Petite Savanne

The following tours emphasize don't-miss attractions, & the best-of-the-best are highlighted with a star (☆).

You'll have to take two routes to explore the island south of Roseau because no single road follows the southernmost coast. Leave the capital on the coast road in the direction of Charlotteville and Castle Comfort, where you find several small hotels along the rocky shore. When you reach the village of Louibiere, you can cut across the mountains to Grand Bay and Petite Savanne or stay along the waterfront all the way to Scotts Head.

***HIGHLIGHTS**: **Sulphur springs** and a charming **stone church** in Soufrière; beach and underwater sites at **Scotts Head**; views from the cliffs around **Grand Bay**.*

Soufrière Bay

The coastal road south of the fishing village of Louibier takes you through lovely countryside to Soufrière Bay (☆). Stop here to see the murals of village life painted on the walls of the Catholic church which has stood near the beach since King George III was ruler of England. Nearby, fishermen build lobster traps and work on their colorful boats, and kids from the village play in the surf made warm by hot springs. The town is now known for its lively street parties called Korne Korn La, and it was once the site of sugar and lime juice factories. You can visit the remains of the old buildings, if they interest you, but there's not much to see.

Sulphur Springs

From the edge of the village, near the school, you can drive less than a mile inland to the Sulphur Springs and hot water pools (☆). French soldiers once relaxed in baths built around the springs, and today islanders use the steamy waters for bathing and washing clothes. It's possible to hike into the mountains from here to **Tete Morne**, where you'll have a sensational view of Grand Bay on the Atlantic coast.

Scotts Head

Cachacrou is a Carib word meaning "that which is being eaten by the sea." You will appreciate the appropriateness of the name when you see the peninsula.

Back on the coast highway, heading south from Soufrière, you soon come to Scotts Head (☆). This is one of the prettiest bits of land on the island. A narrow strip of land connects the lively fishing village of Scotts Head with the southernmost promontory tip of the island where **Fort Cachacrou** once stood. Most of the fort has long ago crumbled and fallen into the

ocean, but you can climb to the top of the peninsula for an awesome view in every direction – Martinique is 20 miles to the south; the coast of Dominica sits to the north; and the meeting of the Atlantic and the Caribbean is to the east.

★ DID YOU KNOW?

Scotts Head is named after Captain Scott, an English soldier who helped win the island from the French in 1761. Don't believe stories about a Scotsman who was beheaded by the Caribs here – they're not true.

A narrow sandy beach fronts the marine reserve that protects the underwater environment between Point Cachacrou (the headland that is now often called Scotts Head as well, since the fort no longer exists) and Anse Bateaux, north of Soufrière. Snorkeling and scuba diving are outstanding here, and gorgeous coral reefs grow close to shore on underwater volcanoes.

The coastal road ends at Scotts Head, so if you want to drive to the southern villages and on the east side of the mountain, you must return to Loubiere (about a 15-minute trip). Where the road divides, a turn to the east (right when heading toward Roseau) will take you inland up a steep road lined with fern and bamboo.

At **Bellevue Chopin**, high on the mountain, there are wonderful views of Roseau. You can hike to **Morne Anglais** from here, but it's a long, steep climb. You may opt to continue down to the village of **Bereuka** on Grand Bay.

Another trail up Morne Anglais starts in the village of Giraudel, which is inland from Castle Comfort just south of Roseau.

Land in this area, at the remote southeast end of the island, has always been used for agriculture. At one

time, large plantations sprawled across the region, and you can visit old lime factories and sugar mills. One of the most interesting is the mill at **Geneva Estate**, which is the setting for parts of novels written by Dominica-born writer Jean Rhys, author of the popular *Wide Sargasso Sea.* It's located on the road between Berekua and Petite Savane, along with others at Stowe and Bagatelle, near Fond Saint Jean.

★ NOTE

If you come upon grassy stalks laid out on the mountain road around Pichelin, east of Bellevue Chopin, just drive over them. They are being dried for use in braided straw mats, and your car will do no damage.

Grand Bay

The headlands at both ends of Grand Bay, **Pointe Tanama** on the west and **Carib Point** on the east, were once fortified to protect the island from attack. You can explore along these cliffs to find ruins of the old forts and take in sweeping views of the bay. Another fantastic viewpoint is **Tête Morne**, reached by a steep road at the west end of L'Allay, the main village street. When the road ends, you can walk up the hill to the lookout. The jagged path down the other side leads to the sulphur springs above the village of Soufrière.

In the village of **Grand Bay**, the most interesting site is the church that was founded by the Jesuits in the early 1700s. The bell tower has been relocated to a hilltop so its sound can carry over a wider area. In the

cemetery is the oldest crucifix on the island, which was carved from a solid block of stone about 1720.

Continuing east, you drive along the cliffs with terrific views of the surf breaking below the villages of Stowe and Dubuc. Farther on, you come to **Petite Savanne**, where descendants of the first French settlers produce bay oil and rum. A new road has been completed on to the village of Delices on the east coast, but it is quite steep and the mountains plunge sharply into the ocean, so you may want to skip the adventure. Hikers can take a trail that leads up to Morne Paix Bouche, which offers good views of the east coast at Pointe Mulatre.

Delices is covered in the "East Coast Tour," below.

Don't miss the cricket field in Petite Savanne, where the boundary line hugs the edge of a cliff above the Atlantic.

West Coast Tour

Roseau to Capucin Cape

The Caribbean coast is drier than the central mountains or windward east coast, so temperatures tend to be a bit warmer and vegetation is somewhat scrubbier. Dominica's two main cities, Roseau to the south and Portsmouth to the north, are connected by a road that is literally hacked out of the mountainside at some points. Quaint villages dot the shoreline, and inland detours lead to lush valleys and lofty rain forests.

HIGHLIGHTS: *Pretty seaside* ***fishing villages****; snorkeling at* ***Rodney's Rock****; photo ops on the grassy banks of* ***Layou River****; sidetrips into the* ***Northern Forest Reserve****; a boat trip on* ***Indian River****; exploring* ***Fort Shirley*** *and* ***Cabrits National Park****.*

Old Mill Cultural Centre

The runway at Canefield Airport now cuts through land once planted in sugar.

Take Queen Mary Street across the river in Roseau and drive north up Goodwill Road, following the coast. Just before Canefield Airport you'll spot the Old Mill Cultural Centre. Stop in to view exhibits of traditional handicrafts and paintings by well-known local artists. Haitian sculptor Louis Desiree runs the **Woodcarving Training School** at the center, and his students' works are displayed at the Old Mill. The cultural complex is housed in a converted sugar mill on the grounds of an old plantation, and the original waterwheel that was used to drive the sugar press is still there.

Massacre

On the north side of the airport is the small village of Massacre, named after the slaughter of 80 Caribs by British troops in a battle that took place there in 1674. The incident is particularly memorable because of the human-interest story attached to it.

A Dinner Before The Killing

In the mid 1600s, Sir Thomas Warner, an Englishman who presided as governor over the jurisdiction of Saint Kitts, fathered two sons – one by a Carib woman from Dominica, and the other with his English wife. When the governor died, his Carib son left Saint Kitts and moved to his mother's native island, where he soon became a Carib chief. As fate would have it, the other son, Philip Warner, became commander of the British troops on Saint Kitts.

When Dominican Carib tribes staged repeated raids on Saint Kitts, Colonel Philip Warner was chosen to lead a retaliation attack on Dominica. According to legend, Colonel Warner contacted his brother, Carib Warner (aka Indian Warner), and arranged to meet him on Pringles Bay on the west coast of Dominica for a dinner gathering. The brothers, accompanied by their troops, enjoyed a large feast before Colonel Warner attacked Chief Warner and stabbed him to death. This signaled the English troops to attack and slaughter the Carib tribe.

You can get a good view of the bay and shoreline where the massacre took place from the attractive Catholic chapel set on a hill in the village.

Mahaut and **Belfast** are rather cluttered commercial areas where Dominica Coconut Products manufactures soaps and cosmetics from coconut oil. The factory was recently acquired by US companies and processes all the coconuts grown on the island. (Palmolive is perhaps the most recognized brand name.) Rum is made at the nearby D-Special Rum Distillery, so the two towns are important to the island's economy.

Rodney's Rock

Watch on the left, about a mile north of the factories, for Rodney's Rock. The black lava outcrop sits majestically off the coast and deserves a legend – even an undocumented one.

The Legend of Rodney's Rock

The locally accepted tale is that Sir George Rodney, admiral of the British troops assigned to Dominica, fooled and diverted an invading French fleet in April 1782 by hanging lanterns on the massive rock to make it appear that a British warship was anchored offshore.

Whether the legend is true or not, Rodney's Rock is a terrific photo opportunity. If you have your equipment with you, snorkel in the calm water around the shallow reef along the shore and Rodney's Rock. Frogfish and seahorses are common here. Also, watch for the huge crabs that give this stretch of coast the name Crab City.

Layou River & Valley

Continuing north, the road crosses the **Layou** (☆), the longest river on the island, and passes by **Mero beach**, a fine swimming and snorkeling spot between the villages of Saint Joseph and Salisbury.

Turn inland along the river for a detour up the **Layou Valley** (☆). This was once an area of beautiful freshwater pools and spring-fed, hot-water spas. However, an enormous landslide in 1997 dumped tons of dirt from the island's interior into the river, causing the water to dam up and overflow its banks. The valley is still splendid, but the river isn't safe for swimming. Still, it's worth your time to take this detour just to see how the landslide has altered the terrain and how nature is repairing the damage. Within a few years, if there are no further disasters, the river should wash itself clean and emerge more stunning than ever.

Estates

Back along the coast, the road passes a series of small villages that spread up from the shore into the hills. At the **Macoucherie Estate**, south of Salisbury, stop to see sugarcane being crushed by an old-fashioned waterwheel, one of the last in the West Indies. There are no organized tours, but visitors are welcome free of charge between 7 am and 3 pm on weekdays. Juice

from the sugarcane is used to make the popular Macoucherie rum.

North of the small town of Dublanc, you can turn inland to reach the **Syndicate Estate** (☆), where a trail leads up to the summit of **Morne Diablotin** (☆), Dominica's highest mountain (4,767 feet).

Northern Forest Reserve

The peak of **Morne Diablotin**, located in the Northern Forest Reserve (☆), is named for devilishly ugly birds with a wicked call who were known as *diablotin* by islanders. The devil-bird's proper name is the black-capped petrel, a shore bird that prefers mountain hideouts for nesting. They were once common on the slopes of Morne Diablotin, but over the years they've been hunted to the point of extinction, and have not been seen in the area recently.

Today, the mountain's rain forest is home to sisserou and jaco parrots, and you may spot them if you visit **Parrot Lookout** (☆) at sunrise or sunset. It's possible to drive almost all the way to the observation point before the road ends at an elevation of about 1,700 feet and a well-tended trail continues up the mountain. From the parking area in the Syndicate Estate, it's an easy walk on the one-mile loop trail to the lookout across the Picard River valley.

If you plan to hike farther, consider hiring a guide to lead you on the 3,000-foot climb through five vegetation zones, including a cloud forest. The trail is clear, but steep, and only fit hikers should attempt to reach the summit. A knowledgeable guide will add valuable input about wildlife and plants along the way, and provide the best chance of spotting one of the rare parrots.

Parrots

Parrots choose mates for life. They live, on average, about 70 years.

Dominicans call their national bird a sisserou parrot, but it is known internationally as the *Amazona imperialis* or imperial parrot. This royal-looking bird is 18 to 20 inches long, weighs about two pounds, and has a 30-inch wingspan as an adult. Its back is mostly deep green, the wings have a red streak at the tips, and its head is a dark, green-toned blue. You can see it on the island's flag, in the aviary at the Botanical Gardens in Roseau, and ever so rarely in the island's upper rain forest. Dominica is the only place where this magnificent parrot is found.

Another indigenous and endangered parrot that lives only on Dominica is the *Amazona arausiaca* or jaco (also spelled jacquot). This bird is smaller, and a paler shade of green than the sisserou. It has a distinctive red band around its neck, and lives at lower elevations in the rain forest.

Pointe Ronde

Return to the west coast road and drive north a short distance to Pointe Ronde. This is a favorite anchorage area for sailboats and the rocky shoreline is an ideal hunting ground for shell collectors. North, around the curve of the bay, there's a mile-long stretch of sandy beach and some good snorkeling spots. One of the best is the coral bed growing near the pier at Portsmouth Beach Hotel, south of the Picard River.

Indian River

North of the pier, before you enter Portsmouth, you will see independent guides set up along the road with homemade signs advertising boat rides up the shady Indian River (☆). This highly recommended tour offers a close-up look at a fascinating ecological zone inhabited by various freshwater creatures and hundreds of birds. Most of the guides know the river well and can spot rare plants and wildlife hidden along the marsh.

TIP

Be sure to choose a rowboat rather than a powerboat, since the noise of a motor will detract from the peacefulness of the river and scare the wildlife. Negotiate a price before you set out (expect to pay about EC$20, US$8, per person).

Carib Indians once lived on the river banks and used it as a route to fishing grounds in the Caribbean Sea. When early European ships stopped on the island for freshwater or wood, crew members often rowed up "the river of the Indians" to trade with the Caribs and soon began marking their maps "Indian River." Today, visitors are intrigued by the intricate roots of the bwa mang trees that house scampering crabs, and awed by the beautiful orchids that grow wild among the ferns along the swampy banks.

Most passengers buy a drink for their skipper.

Your guide will probably suggest a stop at the bar located where the river narrows and becomes rocky.

If you're interested in exploring, ask about walking inland to a spot where migrating birds gather during

the winter. It's not far, and you cross through some unspoiled countryside.

Portsmouth

The groups of young people strolling along the roads and eating at roadside snack bars are probably students from nearby Ross University.

Portsmouth (☆) sits in the curve of **Prince Rupert Bay** (☆), named for 16th-century nobleman, Prince Rupert of the Rhine. The bay is lovely, with palms growing in golden sand along the shore and twin volcanos towering above the northern tip in Cabrits National Park.

Because of the protected harbor in the bay, Portsmouth was important to early settlers and was destined to be the island's capital until malaria and yellow fever broke out. When the epidemic forced government to set up in Roseau, Portsmouth became a seaport town catering to ship crews. Travel between the two main towns was difficult until well into the 20th century, when the west-coast road was carved out of the mountains. Today, visitors will notice a definite difference between the capital and the number-two town, and many may prefer the high-spirited, rough-around-the-edges style of the northern port.

Since Portsmouth is a popular anchorage for commercial and private vessels, it has everything a visitor needs, including a new cruise ship terminal with a visitors center, museum and crafts shop. From this port, passengers step directly into a national park. The town is less than a mile from the park, and visitors can stroll to the Bay Street public market or one of the local restaurants. The golden-sand beach in front of Purple Turtle Beach Club on the bay is ideal for sunning and swimming.

Cabrits National Park

Bring water, sunblock, hiking boots or sturdy walking shoes, as well as a swimsuit. Throw in a pair of binoculars as well as some snorkeling gear if you have them.

Cabrits National Park (☆) is the highlight of the northwest coast, and **Fort Shirley** (☆) is the highlight of the park. Plan to spend most of the day in this area exploring the grassy Cabrits promontory, its well-mapped stone ruins, and the scenic bays that surround it on three sides.

★ DID YOU KNOW?

Cabrits is derived from words that mean "goat" in Spanish and other languages. Before refrigeration, sailors often left goats on the slopes above Prince Rupert Bay to graze and fatten for eating.

As you approach the Cabrits peninsula from the south, you see volcanic twin peaks covered in lush green vegetation rising above the bay. It is was here that the British began construction of a complex called Prince Rupert's Garrison in 1774.

Slaves built Prince Rupert's Garrison from black volcanic rock cemented with mortar made from limestone found on offshore coral reefs. The red clay bricks seen in ovens and cisterns came from England.

Over the years, both the French and English (depending on which nation was currently in control) added buildings until the Cabrits held a fort (Fort Shirley), housing for 600 men, a hospital, seven gun batteries and a cluster of storehouses. When the fortification was abandoned in 1854, the buildings fell into ruins, and the surrounding forest quickly engulfed the entire peninsula. In 1982, work began to clear vegetation away from the fort and restore some of the

buildings. There's no admission charge and buildings, including the small museum, generally are open 10 am-5 pm, but hours vary with the seasons and cruise-ship schedules.

Park in the lot near the cruise ship terminal and walk past restrooms and shops to a path that leads up to Fort Shirley.

If a cruise ship is in port, there will be a lot of activity on the Cabrits, but at other times you probably will have the massive complex to yourself. The national park includes both the 1,313-acre peninsula and a 1,053-acre underwater park off the north shore, so you'll have plenty of room to roam either way.

From the top of Cabrits, Prince Rupert's Bluff offers exceptional views: Guadeloupe and Les Saintes to the north across Douglas Bay; Portsmouth and the west coast to the south across Prince Rupert's Bay; and Morne Diablotin, Dominica's highest mountain, inland to the east.

As you walk paths linking the fort with outer buildings, large placards pose trivia questions, such as, *When does a treefrog extend its throat*? The answer is given at the next stop (in case you're wondering, it's during courtship and when defending its territory). Once you've strolled the 200-year-old military compound, explore the grounds with its diverse wildlife and abundant vegetation. Then, if you have boots, hike about 20 minutes on an unpaved trail to Douglas Bay.

The road on the far northeast coast has sharp turns, deep rain gutters, unrailed sides & blind curves, all of which require excellent driving skills.

Douglas Bay (☆), part of the protected national park, can also be reached by car. From Portsmouth, continue north on the coast road past the left turn that leads to the parking lot at Cabrits National Park. White buoys off the rocky, palm-shaded beach at Douglas Bay mark an underwater snorkeling trail over coral reefs. Colorful fish hide in the coral and feed off sea grass. It's a fabulous clear-water wonderland, and, unless a cruise ship is docked on the island, you may have the whole place to yourself.

Capucin

The road continues north from Douglas Bay, hugging the coast and providing excellent views of Les Saintes, until it ends at Capucin on the northeast tip of the island. Diving and snorkeling are good at Toucari Bay, just north of Douglas, but the water at Capucin Cape, where several shipwrecks lay at the bottom of the ocean, is considered too rough.

East Coast Tour

Pennville to Delices

Some of Dominica's best-kept secrets are along the windward coast. This area of the island hasn't changed much since the earliest settlers arrived, and it is the least visited by tourists. You'll enjoy deserted beaches, travel-poster views from rugged cliffs and untouched forest. It's perhaps the best place in the world to get away from it all. For this very reason, escaped slaves once hid in this region, and a community of Carib Indians now live on designated land midway up the coast.

HIGHLIGHTS: Daredevil drives *to secluded hamlets on the north cape;* ***sandy beaches*** *and* ***pristine dive sites*** *on the due-north coast;* ***Carib Territory****;* ***L'Escalier Tête Chien****; the* ***North Cape****.*

There's a cross-island road from Portsmouth to the east coast that begins near the mouth of the Indian River on the Caribbean side, meanders through coconut plantations, and ends near Sandwich Bay on the Atlantic side. At the junction of this east/west road with the north/south east-coast road, you can turn left (north) toward the village of Pennville and zigzag

along the steep shoreline. (The roads don't go by proper names, and although this description sounds confusing, it's easier to follow once you're there!) It's a beautiful up-and-down ride to secluded villages perched daringly on cliffs overlooking isolated bays on the Atlantic.

Vieille Case & Pennville

The villages of Vieille Case and Pennville were established by French settlers from nearby islands in the 1700s and their influence is evident today. Guadeloupe's outer islands can be seen from the hilltops here. French Créole is spoken among the villagers, and some residents cross the channel to work on the French islands during the day.

One of the most picturesque churches on the island (the **Vieille Case Village Church**; Catholic) sits at the foot of Morne aux Diables in Vieille Case. Its stone façade is very old-world, and its red roof and tower contrast dramatically with the deep green grove that surrounds it. Take time to walk along the shore on Autrou Bay, where fishermen wrestle with their boats in the crashing surf.

If you have a four-wheel-drive vehicle or want to hike, it's possible to continue around the tip of the island to the west coast. The landscape and views are marvelous here. When you're finished, turn back south at Pennville to tour the rest of the east coast.

South Along the Atlantic

The east coast actually faces due north for a short distance between Chaval Blanc Point at Sandwich Bay (west of Hampstead) and Crompton Point (east of Calibishie). This curve in the shoreline allows the

sandy beaches to be sheltered from winds by the mountains and from raging waves by reefs and rocky outcroppings. **Woodford Hills Bay**, **Pointe Baptiste,** and **Batibou Bay** all are excellent spots for swimming and snorkeling. Stand on the red-rock cliffs of Pointe Baptiste for a look at Marie-Galante and Guadeloupe across the channel.

Calibishie is one of the most beautiful villages on the east coast. A mile-long barrier reef shelters its lagoon, residents take pride in tending their colorful flower gardens, and you can enjoy a drink at a seaside bar.

Most beaches along the northeast coast are reached by unpaved roads or paths. Be careful not to trespass on private property.

The two rocks jutting up from Calibishie Bay are now called "glass window" or "open door" by young islanders because they seem like an opening into the underworld. Old-timers still refer to the boulders as Porte d'Enfer because they once supported an arch said to resemble Hell's Gate. On the night of October 26, 1956, the top of the natural arch collapsed and fell into the sea. Nevertheless, visitors still stop to photograph this captivating spot.

Watch along the main street for the local artist Dawen Dawey, who shows bright painted-silk artwork outside his studio.

When you turn southward after Calibishie, there's a striking change in the coastline. The road runs inland for a while, then emerges at dazzling **Londonderry Bay**, where palm trees grow out of rocky cliffs that drop down to gleaming black sand beaches on the rolling Atlantic. Melville Hall, the island's main airport, and the town of Marigot are nearby.

Marigot

This area of the island was built up in the late 1800s when an English firm took over rundown plantations and began producing cocoa products. The new company was unable to hire enough local workers, so they brought in residents from other English-speaking islands. Today, descendants of these workers still live

around Marigot and the nearby village of Wesley, so very little French or French Créole is spoken, the residents tend to be Methodist rather than Catholic, and English rather than French traditions are observed.

Carib Territory

A few miles farther south 3,500 descendants of pre-Colombian Caribs live on 3,700 acres along the Atlantic coast. In actuality, the eight Carib villages are not much different from any other small community on the island, and few of the residents, who call themselves Kalinago, resemble their bronze-skinned, straight-haired South American forefathers. However, there are a few traces of their original culture remaining, and the settlement is well worth a visit.

On the main coastal road you'll find small craft shops that sell baskets woven from rain forest larouma reeds. This craft, which focuses on intricate brown, black and white patterns, was handed down through many generations. Turn inland to the little hamlet of Salybia, where the altar inside the A-shaped mouina (Church of Sainte Marie) is a canoe. A traditional oval-shaped Carib meeting house, called a *carbet*, is nearby.

The word canoe comes from a Carib word, canoua, which was their traditional long dugout boat built from a single tree trunk to withstand ocean conditions.

Caribs are, by tradition, expert boat builders, and still construct each canoe by hand from a single gommier tree. You might see a dugout filled with rocks and water to expand the trunk. The Caribs can sail these canoes long distances, even in rough Atlantic waters.

The Gli-Gli Project

In 1997, Carib artist Jacob Frederick achieved his dream of reenacting the voyage that brought the first Carib settlers to Dominica from their

homes in South America. His quest was called The Gli-Gli Project, after a small determined hawk that figures in Carib mythology, and his route was the reverse course followed by his ancestors more than a thousand years ago.

Along with Aragorn Dick-Read, an artist and sailor from the island of Tortola, and Etien Charles, a master canoe builder, Frederick supervised the 20-man crew who built a 35-foot dugout from a gommier tree cut on Morne Lasouce under a full-moon on a December night in 1995. When the canoe was complete in May, 1997, a crew of nine Carib men and two Carib women sailed the *Gli-Gli* from Dominica, through the southern Caribbean, to northwest Guyana on the Atlantic coast of South America – then successfully back to Dominica in August, 1997.

L'Escalier Tête Chien

Below Salybia, at the mouth of the Crayfish River, a pretty waterfall cascades over large boulders into the sea. A mile south, L'Escalier Tête Chien crawls up the hillside out of the ocean near Jenny Point in the village of Sineku. *Tête chien* means "dog's head" in French, and is the islanders' name for a boa constrictor (they thought the snake's head resembled a dog's head). *L'escalier* means "the staircase," so *l'escalier tête chien* is the snake's staircase – and the name fits the geological formation quite well. Carib myths involving the snake-patterned rocks have been altered over time, but they probably were based upon a pilgrimage up the formation in order to gain special powers or blessings.

Castle Bruce

At Castle Bruce is the magnificently dangerous **Saint David Bay** (also called Anse Quanery). Sit under one of the palms and watch Carib fishermen heading out to sea in the morning or riding the surf back in the afternoon. It looks effortless, but a strong current runs just offshore, and the water is not safe for swimmers or inexperienced sailors.

Petite Soufrière

Driving south, you'll pass banana fields, forested slopes and tiny villages on breathtakingly beautiful coves – every one worthy of a stop and a photo. Eventually, at Petite Soufrière, the paved road ends and you must retrace your route to the intersection where the northern fork of the cross-island Transinsular Road leads inland. Hikers can take a trail at the end of the coastal road that climbs into the hills between Petite Soufrière and Rosalie.

If you want to drive along the far southern end of the east coast, go back to where the Transinsular Road forks, east of the Pont Casse junction near the trailhead to Emerald Pool. At this point, take the southern turn toward **Rosalie**, where the Rosalie River offers swimmers a chance to cool off in several freshwater pools. Between Rosalie and **Delices**, the road winds up and down near the coast with many opportunities for ocean views and seaside picnics.

Inland Tours

Dominica's finest treasures are hidden in the mountains that run north/south through the interior. As

you drive along the coastal roads and visit seaside villages, allow plenty of time to travel inland to explore the best natural sites. Branches of the Transinsular Road and the Roseau-Laudat road provide access to many of the attractions in **Morne Trois Pitons National Park** (☆) and the **Central Forest Reserve**. Other locations can be reached by interior roads that jut off the main coast road and cut through the mountain forests. You can reach many of the sites by car, but many more require a hike, and a few are demanding full-day excursions.

TIP

Avoid crowds by visiting the most popular sites on non-cruise-ship days. If you're part of the cruise-ship crowd, arrange a private tour to explore less-visited spots. Guides meet the ships as they dock, or you can request a guide in advance by contacting one of the land-tour companies listed in *Dominica A to Z*.

***HIGHLIGHTS**: Twin waterfalls at Trafalgar; Emerald Pool; a one-eyed monster (!) at Freshwater Lake; warm springs at Titou Gorge.*

Trafalgar Falls

There are some superb sites that can be reached easily from an eastbound road out of Roseau. The road forks twice. More or less straight-on leads to the village of Laudat. A right turn at the first fork goes to Wotten Waven, and a right turn at the second fork ends at Trafalgar Falls (☆).

TIP

If you don't have a car, check the bus schedule at Old Market Plaza for times and fares to various sites. It's possible to take a bus from the corner of King George V Street and Bath Road, near the police station, to Trafalgar Falls. The trip takes about 20 minutes and costs US$2.50, round-trip.

It's a quick five-mile drive north up King George V Street through Bath Estate to the parking lot at Trafalgar Falls, one of the most visited spots on the island. You can stop at four-acre **D'Auchamps Gardens** along the way to brush up on botanical names and look out across the valley to the island's highest mountains in Morne Trois Pitons National Park. The gardens are open daily 9 am-4 pm. ☎ 448-3346; e-mail honychurchs@cwdom.dm. Entrance fee is US$2, and a guided tour costs US$10, including the entrance fee.

Trafalgar Falls are twin, side-by-side chutes known affectionately by islanders as Papa and Mama. It's a scenic 10-minute hike from the parking lot to the wooden lookout platform and a natural pool where you can swim.

Papa, on the left, is the taller of the two chutes. It plunges down a 200-foot rock face. At his feet, hot sulphur springs form small whirlpools, where you can soak. Mama is broad, cool and gentle. There's a deep, decent-sized swimming pool at her feet. Guides usually hang out at the beginning of the trail, and if you intend to go farther than the viewing platform, it's a good idea to ask one to accompany you. They charge about EC$20; be sure to negotiate a price before you begin hiking.

WARNING

A rocky ridge separates the two chutes, and it can be a bit slippery getting down to the pools, especially Papa's. Take care.

Wotten Waven is across the valley from the falls and you can hike between the two, but you'll need a good guide to show you the way. A better choice is to drive back toward Roseau, then turn left (almost 360°) at the first fork in the road east of the capital. A sign in the village points the way to a trail to bubbling sulphur springs that are thought to have therapeutic value.

Morne Trois Pitons National Park

The village of Laudat, 4½ miles northeast of Roseau, offers access to most parts of Morne Trois Pitons National Park (☆), a 17,000-acre protected natural area that was designated a World Heritage Site in December, 1997 (the first enlisted natural site in the eastern Caribbean). The name Morne Trois Pitons translates as "three-peak mountain," and the huge volcano on the park's northern edge appears to have three peaks when viewed from the west coast.

Laudat's elevation is 2,000 feet and Morne Trois Piton is almost 4,600 feet at its tallest peak.

Freshwater Lake

You can reach Freshwater Lake (☆) by car (preferably 4WD) or on foot. A rocky 2½-mile road goes from Laudat, along the south edge of Morne Macaque, almost to the lake.

There's some folklore attached to this nine-acre dammed reservoir: legend has it that a one-eyed mon-

ster lives at the bottom. Less interesting is the modern-day reality that the lake is a source for an incongruous hydroelectric plant near the village.

Freshwater Lake has some fine picnic spots, and the reward for making a short climb up a steep slope on the southeast shore is a marvelous view of the Atlantic.

Several trails to other popular sites in the national park begin in or near Laudat, and it's possible to arrange for guides who live nearby and know the area well. Most hotels and guesthouses will suggest guides, or you can contact the tourist office in Roseau (☎ 448-2045) or one of the tour operators listed in *Dominica A to Z*.

Titou Gorge

Titou Gorge, the outlet of Freshwater Lake, can be reached by a short walk. You have to wade, swim, slip and slide part of the way, too. The trail, which eventually leads to Boiling Lake and the Valley of Desolation, starts at the gorge near the power plant in Laudat. You need a guide to reach the more distant sites, but the walk to Titou is short and easy. When you get there, you'll find a deep pool fed by hot springs at the base of a canyon. If the water isn't rushing too strongly, you can swim up the gorge to a waterfall.

See "Hiking" in the "Sunup to Sundown" section for information on the trails.

An inflatable raft makes the gorge more fun, but stay out of the water if it looks churned up from a strong current.

Emerald Pool

The Emerald Pool (☆) is on the far northern boundary of the park at the southern edge of the Central Forest

Reserve (off the Transinsular Road). It's one of the island's major attractions, and you don't want to go there on cruise-ship days. At other times, take a bus from Canefield destined for Castle Bruce, and get off at the parking area for the trail. (Your bus driver will know where the trail is.)

By car, head inland from either coast on the cross-island Transinsular Road to the trailhead three miles east of Pont Casse and five miles west of Castle Bruce. Hikers can begin the climb up Morne Trois Pitons from here, and strollers can follow an easy path through lush, green foliage to the pool. Before Hurricane David raged through the water level was higher, but the pool still is deep enough for a swim.

WARNING

Watch for slippery rocks going down into the water and up to the waterfall. Even the pathway can be slick in spots, since it winds through the lower levels of the rain forest.

Organized Tours

Several companies provide excellent sightseeing or adventure tours lead by enthusiastic guides who never tire of showing off "their" paradise. Half-day tours run about US$20, full-day tours (including lunch) cost US$50. In addition, you can book diving trips, mountain treks, photo safaris and junket trips into protected ecological areas.

A complete list of tour operators is found in *Dominica A to Z*. Tourist offices, ship's shore-excursion directors, and your hotel or guesthouse can usually suggest

tours geared to your special interests. Tourism, especially eco-tourism, is growing quickly, and new, eager-to-please organizations are competing with longtime establishments for the opportunity to flaunt Dominica's natural assets. This gives visitors a wide variety of excellent tour companies. Here are some of the best:

The area code for Dominica is 767.

TOUR COMPANIES	
Dominica Tours	☎ 448-5638; fax 448-5680; e-mail anchorage@cwdom.dm
Ken's Hinterland Adventure Tours	☎ 448-4850; fax 448-8486; e-mail khatts@tod.dm; www.khatts.dm
Nature Island Destinations	☎ 449-6233; fax 449-7100; e-mail nid@cwdom.dm
Raffoul Luxury Tours	☎ 448-2443; fax 448-7490; e-mail akelr@cwdom.dm; www.raffoultours.com
Ras Tours	☎ 448-0412; e-mail cocoacottages@cwdom.dm
HHV Whitchurch & Co.	☎ 448-2181; fax 448-5787 e-mail hhvwhitchurch@cwdom.dm
Wacky Rollers Jeep Safari Tours	☎ 449-8276 (phone/fax); e-mail wackyrollers@yahoo.com; www.wackyrollers.com
Fun Sun Tours	☎ 449-8578; fax 448-1606; e-mail funsuninc@cwdom.dm
Jon Vee Tours	☎ 449-6463; 447-2375 (pager)

Sunup to Sundown

As the travel brochures proclaim, Dominica is for nature lovers and eco-travelers. You're going to spend your days in total awe of the abundant wilderness and raw beauty here.

Hikers, divers, birdwatchers and plant enthusiasts won't have enough hours in the day. There are mountains to conquer, sea life to observe and rare species of birds and plants to discover.

Pack your knapsack with a good pair of binoculars, sturdy hiking boots, and a supply of the island's own bottled water, then set out in any direction for the best adventures in the Caribbean.

Eco-Tourist Site Fees

Sites designated as Eco-Tourist Sites now have a user fee. You can buy a pass from most car rental agencies, tour operators, tourist offices and the eco-tourist sites themselves. Cruise-ship passengers can get them onboard from the activities desks. A weekly pass runs US$10, daily passes are US$5, and per-site entrance fees are US$2. All national parks and protected reserves are designated eco-sites, and the fees are enforced at major attractions. While beaches and most trails have no fees, there is a charge to walk/hike to specific points, such as Emerald Pool.

Beaches

Dominica is not known for terrific beaches, and you won't find wide stretches of sand dotted with umbrellas, lounge chairs, snack bars and sports-equipment shacks. However, there are a some fine sandy beaches and numerous secret coves where you can spread a blanket and swim or snorkel over beautiful coral reefs. Many of these spots are tucked behind trees or hills and don't have paved roads leading to them, which makes them all the more private. Others are just steps from the main coastal road.

Skinny dipping is a legal and cultural no-no on Dominica, and you don't want to get caught. But if you find an isolated lagoon, who is going to know?

West Coast Beaches

See the list of certified operators under "Diving and Snorkeling."

There are 28 identified snorkel areas off the west coast where the water is usually clear and calm. The following are a few of the best swimming and snorkeling beaches on the leeward side. Most dive shops will rent snorkeling equipment for US$10-15 per day, and guided snorkeling tours run around US$25.

Beaches south of Roseau aren't truly the best the island has to offer, but they are some of the most interesting. About three miles out of town, just past the village of Pointe Michel, the road turns away from the coast. Park here and follow a path down to a rocky little beach with **Champagne Reef** a few feet offshore. The effervescent turmoil, caused by hot springs escaping from an underwater volcano, is fun to swim in and snorkel through. You notice a warmer water temperature about the same time that you're engulfed in tiny bubbles.

At the far southern tip of the island, about 10 minutes by car from Champagne Reef at Point Guignard, the

kick-back-and-chill villages of Soufrière and Scott's Head loll on beautiful **Soufrière Bay**. Walk out to the end of the isthmus, where a narrow strip of sand offers little more than a place to spread your towel. The protected marine reserve just offshore is fabulous. Cradled in an ancient volcano, the bay is a favorite dive site because of its abundant coral and sea life. The water is calm enough for leisurely swimming, and underwater sights can be seen with a mask and snorkel.

Lots on the waterfront are for sale in the Castaways Development, and after a few rum punches, you may be tempted to buy.

Between Roseau and Portsmouth, the coastal road passes some decent swimming and snorkeling spots. There's a little beach where the Canefield River meets Pringles Bay, and **Rodney's Rock**, visible from the road a couple of miles farther north, has some interesting marine life just offshore.

Méro Beach is a better bet. This is where Windjammer cruises dock and party, and Castaways Beach Hotel is located here. The hotel has a dock, sailboats and a waterside bar offering rum punch made from scratch. **Dive Castaways**, ☎ 449-6244, runs scuba, fishing and kayak trips from the beach, and if none of that interests you, you'll find this a pleasant spot for swimming and snorkeling.

Picard Beach, on Portsmouth's south side, is considered by many to be the best beach on the island. It's a two-mile stretch of palm-shaded grayish sand sloping gracefully into the warm, gentle Caribbean surf at the foot of the rain forest. Coconut Beach Hotel and Picard Beach Resort are located here, around the north end of rocky Pointe Ronde. Snorkeling is best around the jetty and, if you're patient, you may spot an octopus or seahorse.

Carbits Dive Center, ☎ 445-3010, leads scuba and snorkeling trips to sites in the marine reserve in **Douglas Bay**, but you also can snorkel the underwa-

ter trail on your own. The reefs grow on top of submerged volcanic rock, and are home of colorful fish, eels and seahorses. If a cruise ship is docked at Cabrits, the park and ocean reserve will be crowded. On other days, you may have the whole shady beach to yourself.

Northern Beaches

Once you travel around the north end of the island, the beaches are more beautiful, but the water crashing in from the Atlantic is rough and often too dangerous for swimming. The views, however, are marvelous, and the golden sand is ideal for picnics.

TIP

This side of the island is sparsely populated and quite rural, and you may want to consider renting a four-wheel-drive vehicle if you plan to tackle the rutted, mostly-unpaved roads down to coast.

The best beaches are around the village of Calibishie, where the coastline turns from due east to due north. **Batibou, Woodford Hill,** and **Pointe Baptiste** are all sheltered from the brunt of the Atlantic's force. The red boulders at Pointe Baptiste, along with the two rocks that once held the arch over the Gateway to Hell in Calibishie Bay, are favorite subjects for photographers. All beaches along this span of north-facing coastline are pretty, and usually their warm waters are calm enough for swimming.

Rivers & Natural Pools

Rivers flow through the mountainous interior, forming waterfalls and clean natural pools. Most locals prefer to swim in these rivers and pools, rather than the ocean, and you'll want to give them a try – especially after a long hike.

The most popular streams for swimming are the **Picard River**, which comes from the hills above Portsmouth and empties into Prince Rupert Bay, and the **Machoucherie River**, which flows into the Caribbean between Méro Beach and the village of Salisbury. The **Layou**, the longest river on Dominica, once offered the most favored swimming holes on the island. However, a 1997 landslide filled the stream with dirt, causing the water to overflow its banks and flood the surrounding valley. Environmentalists say nature will heal itself, so drive inland along the river to check its progress. When it's had time to adjust, the Layou should be an excellent spot for swimming once again.

WARNING

Don't swim in the ocean or rivers near Roseau, where the water is dirty. In other places on and around the island, the water is wonderfully clean and pure. Avoid slow-moving rivers since parasitic *bilharzia* is always a possibility.

Two of the finest natural pools on Dominica are at the bottom of **Trafalgar Falls**. One is a small, spa-like basin filled with hot sulphur springs. The other is

large enough for swimming. Getting to and into them is a slip-and-slide experience best attempted by the sure-footed. But, once you're in, you'll be reluctant to leave.

Other easy-access dipping pools are at **Emerald Pool** and **Titou Gorge**. As at Trafalgar, the Emerald Pool is at the foot of a waterfall. It's only a short walk from the parking area through the rain forest to the pool, but, except on cruise-ship days, you're likely to have the place all to yourself.

Titou is another hot-water spa. This one at the beginning of the arduous trail to Boiling Lake in the Valley of Desolation (see page 101). Hikers often use Titou as a motivational reward, but you can forego the hike and go straight for the soak by walking a short distance up the trail that starts in the village of Laudat. A waterfall is farther up the gorge, and you can swim to it if the water isn't flowing too fast.

Diving & Snorkeling

Popular dive publications call Dominica unspoiled, unusual and undiscovered – the best in the eastern Caribbean. Novices can have a great time diving almost anywhere, but experienced divers want surprises, and Dominica produces them in abundance. There are dramatic sites directly offshore, where seahorses, frogfish, electric rays, sea snakes and reef squid live among huge stands of yellow tube sponges and golden-orange feathered crinoids.

Southern Dive Sites

At **Scotts Head/Soufrière Marine Reserve**, an ancient volcano is half-submerged with its south and

east rims above water forming the island's coastline along Soufrière Bay. The north and west rims are underwater, creating a magnificent crater with sheer 1,000-foot walls. The reserve runs almost three miles along the coast and protects a diverse underwater world filled with spectacular coral and rare sea creatures.

The most popular sites in this area include:

- **Champagne**, with its bubbly underwater vents that attract schools of squid;
- **Dangleben's Pinnacles**, which are thickly covered in all types of sponges and corals and draw thousands of fish;
- **L'Abym** (The Wall), featuring a 1,500-foot straight-down cliff where frogfish and seahorses hang out.

Northern Dive Sites

Another marine conservation area under the protection of the national parks system is in **Douglas Bay**, on the north side of the Cabrits peninsula. Here, huge barrel sponges, brilliantly colored coral and friendly fish make this one of the top dive sites. Nearby, the secluded **Toucari Caves** are encrusted with black coral and purple tube sponges, and the long tunnels provide an excellent swim-through. A vast assortment of rarely seen creatures live here virtually undisturbed.

Much of the sea around Dominica has not been thoroughly explored, and new dive sites are still being discovered. One of the most popular new locales is a group of submerged sulphur springs inside a volcanic crater off Pointe Ronde at the southern end of Prince Rupert Bay. The springs produce bubbles similar to

the ones at Champagne in the south, and combine with spectacular coral reefs to create a magical dive site.

Dive Centers & Certification

To visit Dominica's incredible underwater world you must be a certified diver accompanied by a registered operator. However, if you're not certified, the operators listed below offer discovery dives and full-certification courses for beginners. Expect to pay US$45 for a one-tank dive, US$70 for a two-tank dive, US$85 for an introduction lesson (including one dive), and around US$350 for a multi-day certification course.

If you are arriving by cruise ship and want to escape the crowds, contact one of these operators ahead of time to arrange a private or small-group trip.

All of the following are full-service PADI dive centers authorized to conduct scuba diving tours off the shores of Dominica.

Anchorage Dive Center
☎ 448-2638; fax 448-5680
e-mail anchorage@cwdom.dm
www.anchoragehotel.dm
Located at the Anchorage Hotel in Castle Comfort, this company has a 40-foot diesel-powered boat that will accommodate 22 divers, and a 30-foot speedboat for groups of 12 or fewer. Fitzroy Armour heads up a great crew that really knows its stuff.

The area code for Dominica is 767.

Dive Castaways
☎ 449-6244; fax 449-6246
In the US: ☎ 888-227-8292 or 954-489-7751
e-mail divecastaways@cwdom.dm
www.divecastaways.dm
Dive Castaways has two 28-foot boats that each handle six divers. Divemaster Kurt Nose has explored the reefs thoroughly and his friendly staff is ready to show you the best sites. They're based at

the Castaways Beach Hotel, midway between Roseau and Portsmouth. Take divers to all the dive sites off the leeward coast.

You can see some of Dominica's outstanding underwater world by glass-bottom boat with Dive Dominica. Visibility is superb, and many reefs are located in fairly shallow water.

Dive Dominica
☎ 448-2188; fax 448-6088
e-mail dive@cwdom.dm
www.divedominica.com
In the US: ☎ 800-544-7631
Located in Castle Comfort Lodge, this is one of the oldest dive shops on the island. They have three customized boats, including their new Dive Cat. Owner/diver Derek Perryman employs an easy-going group of PADI and NAUI trained instructors and divemasters.

Nature Island Dive
☎ 449-8181; fax 449-8182
e-mail natureislanddive@cwdom.dm
www.naturedive.dm
This is one of those secrets that insiders like to keep to themselves. The three European couples who run this fairly new operation vow their inevitable discovery won't lessen their commitment to personalized service for small groups – and there are plenty of reasons to believe this is true. The dive shop sits directly on Soufrière Bay in the heart of the marine reserve. They have three boats, including a new customized 34-foot catamaran equipped with a rinse sink for photographers. The catamaran that can reach 20 super dive sites in under 10 minutes. Even if you don't want to sign up for a tour, they invite everyone to stop by for directions or information.

Cabrits Dive Center
☎ 445-3010; fax 445-3011
e-mail cabritsdive@cwdom.dm
www.cabritsdive.com
Located on Picard Beach near Portsmouth and Cabrits National Park, this is Dominica's only

Since Michael is a native of Germany, all services and PADI certification are available in German or English.

PADI Five-Star Dive Center. Master instructor Michael Salzer and his wife Michelle Springall own and operate the business, which specializes in dive trips to rarely explored sites off the north cape. Cabrits includes a complete retail dive shop and service center, including hydrostatic testing of tanks. In addition to morning, afternoon and night dives, the center offers snorkel trips by boat, waterskiing and ocean kayaking.

Whale- & Dolphin-Watching

You don't have to be an eco-tourist to enjoy watching whales and dolphins in the wild. It's simply a marvelous experience. Most of these sea creatures are seen only in specific areas at certain times of the year, so your trip will require advance planning.

You can see whales & dolphins all year-round, but the best time is from November to March.

The deep water near Dominica's sheltered west coast is an ideal breeding and calving ground for sperm whales. Experts think eight to 12 of the huge mammals live in the area year-round. In addition, seven types of whales and 11 types of dolphins have been seen within five miles of the island at various times of the year.

For these reasons, Dominica is becoming a place to study whales. Some local dive shops have outfitted their boats with sound equipment to help pinpoint the creatures' locations. Plan to include one of their trips in your vacation schedule.

Dominica's warm climate provides great conditions for whale- and dolphin-watching in comfort. Most tours go out for three or four hours in the afternoon and include a briefing on what to look and listen for once you're on the water. Rates, including onboard drinks, average US$45.

TOUR OPERATORS	
These companies have the best-equipped boats and organize the best tours on the island.	
Anchorage Dive Center	☎ 448-2638
Anse-A-Liane	☎ 446-6652; US & Canada, 888-868-6827; e-mail ansealianedive@cwdom.dm
Dive Dominica	☎ 448-2188
Dive Castaways	☎ 449-6244
Rainbow Sports Fishing	☎ 448-8650

Whale & Dolphin Facts

- Whales and dolphins are in a group of mammals called cetaceans. There are around 77 different species of cetaceans.
- There are two groups of whales – baleen and toothed. Sperm whales are in the group called toothed whales. The toothed sperm whale has about 20 large teeth in its lower jaw and few or no teeth in its upper jaw.
- Whales and dolphins have high intelligence.
- A sperm whale's head measures about 35% of its total body length.
- A large male whale can remain underwater (hold its breath) for 60 to 90 minutes.
- Whales eat squid, octopus and various fish.
- Dolphins are smaller and more sociable than whales.
- Female dolphins give live birth to one baby, called a calf, at a time. The calf emerges tail first, suckles from its mother for up to two

years, and stays with its mother for up to six years.

- Dolphins and whales live in groups called pods, and female dolphins tend to stay with one pod for life, but often interact with dolphins from other pods.
- Dolphins slap their tails on the water to show annoyance and use their pectoral flippers to touch friends.
- Air leaving a dolphin's blowhole may reach a speed of over 100 mph. Since a dolphin will drown if it doesn't breathe, it takes only short naps so that it can surface for air.
- If another dolphin is sick and drowning, other dolphins will come to its aid and hold it above water so it can breathe.
- Experts think each dolphin has its own unique whistle that identifies it to other dolphins.

Fishing

You don't have to go far to catch some prize-sized deepwater fish off Dominica's coast. Close-in virgin fishing grounds hold blue marlin, dorado, yellowfin tuna and a variety of other species.

There are plenty of fish tales floating around the island, but it's a blue marlin weighing more than 700 pounds was indeed hooked near the southern shore in 1997. While local sportfishing operators can't promise you the same catch, they guarantee plenty of opportunity and a pleasant day's outing. Full-day charters run about US$700, half-day charters, US$450.

To arrange a fishing expedition on the *Independence of Dominica*, a 34-foot Luhrs, contact **Gamefishing Dominica Limited**, ☎ 449-6638; e-mail saphy@cwdom.dm. They are based at Castaways Beach Hotel. For other fishing charters, contact the National Development Corporation, ☎ 448-2045.

Windsurfing, Sailing & Kayaking

By boat or kayak you can reach terrific hidden coves and fantastic snorkeling sites that are otherwise unaccessible. Ocean kayaking has become very popular in recent years, and the calm waters off the west coast provide ideal conditions.

Winds gusting down from the mountains make sailing and windsurfing a little tricky at times, but those with experience should be up to the challenge.

The best places to arrange for windsurfing and sailing are: **Anchorage Hotel**, a mile south of Roseau (☎ 448-2638); and **Castaways Hotel**, on Méro Beach midway on the west coast (☎ 449-6244).

If you want to see Dominica from the water in divine comfort, contact Captain Antony Agar about cruising on *The Carmela*. He built the 100-foot schooner right on the island and participated in the Gli-Gli voyage to South America. (See The Gli-Gli Project, page 76, for further details of the expedition.) Now the two-masted vessel takes passengers on full- and half-day sailing/snorkeling tours. Contact the captain for scheduled departures at **Carmela Charters**, % 448-2282; fax 449-9198; e-mail agarm@cwdom.dm

The best places to rent a kayak are: **Nature Island Dive** on Soufrière Bay (☎ 449-8181); and **KHATTS** on Old Street in Roseau, ☎ 448-4850.

★ NOTE

Visitors arriving by private boat must clear Customs at one of the ports – Portsmouth, Roseau or Anse Du Mai. The Reigate Waterfront Hotel and the Anchorage Hotel have piers, moorings and facilities. Except in designated areas, it is illegal to anchor within a marine reserve.

Horseback Riding

Steep hills and rugged terrain are no problem for horses. Climb aboard and tour the rainforest without gasping for air. Guided tours cost around $25 per person per hour. For information and reservations, contact **High Ride Stables**, six miles southeast of Roseau near Morne Anglais, ☎ 448-6296; fax 448-6800; e-mail highridestables@yahoo.com.

Hiking

Hiking is an exhilarating adventure in Dominica's vast mountains and dense rain forests where fresh springs feed flowing rivers that tumble into magnificent waterfalls. This is the way to get close to unspoiled nature. Since many of the island's most amazing sites can be reached only by foot on demanding trails, you often will have this grand wilderness all to yourself.

Dominicans are doing a fine job of protecting their country, and the small island has the world-renowned **Morne Trois Pitons National Park**, and several other preserved areas, including the **Northern For-**

est Reserve, **Cabrits National Park**, and the **Central Forest Reserve**. Many of these protected areas are still uncharted because of their tangled profusion of vegetation, but trails lead to enough outstanding sites to keep vacationers busy for weeks.

The Forestry office in the Botanical Gardens in Roseau sells maps and brochures detailing various trails. ☎ 448-2401; fax 448-7999.

There are endless day-hike possibilities on a large system of trails. The following are considered the best by many experienced hikers, but this is an individualist sport, and you may find your personal favorite somewhere else. Check with the Forestry office in Roseau for maps and suggestions to suit your interests and fitness level.

World Heritage Site

Dominica's **Morne Trois Pitons National Park** was registered as a World Heritage Site in December 1997. The park, which was established in 1975, covers about 17,000 acres and contains some of the Lesser Antilles' best examples of rain forests (a tropical evergreen area that receives at least 100 inches of rain per year), montane forest (dense vegetation and trees above 2,000 feet on a mountain) and elfin woodlands (stunted growth above 3,000 feet found on mountain peaks with high winds and shallow soil).

The park is the first natural region in the eastern Caribbean to be listed as a World Heritage Site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). It joins a list of other outstanding heritage locales in the Caribbean, including three sites in Cuba

(Old City Havana, Trinidad and the Valley of the Ingenious, and San Pedro de la Roca Castle); the Colonial City of Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic; the Citadelle in Sans Souci and Ramiers in Haiti; Willemstad, Inner City and Harbour in Curaçao; and La Fortaleza and the Historical Site of San Juan in Puerto Rico.

Morne Trois Piton is dormant, but there is volcanic activity within the park. The Valley of Desolation has more than 50 fumaroles and hot springs. Sulphurous gases from these steamy spots cause the valley to be barren and moonlike – a striking contrast with the lush vegetation in the rest of the park.

The rain forest environment has the tallest trees with the fullest growth. They block most of the sun from reaching the forest floor, and their massive trunks are covered in anthurium and bromeliads (a plant group that also includes the familiar Spanish moss). Most of the plants that grow on the ground are ferns.

Higher, in the montane forest, the vegetation consists of smaller trees with aerial roots that are covered in moss, lichens and orchids. Sunlight gets through these trees more easily and the ground beneath is covered in grasses and ferns. Far up in the elfin woodland, the plants are matted and stunted due to the constant wind, rain and cloud cover.

TIP

An aerial trame opened recently that allows an over-the-top view of the rainforest and waterfalls. New nature trails and a suspension bridge make it possible to explore the forest easily with a naturalist guide. For information, contact the Rainforest Aerial Tram, ☎ 748-TRAM; fax 448-7280; e-mail rainforesttram@cwdom.dm.

Boiling Lake & the Valley of Desolation

No camping is allowed in the national park & forest reserves.

This is the big-daddy of all hikes. It is arduous, gruelling, wet, exhausting, muddy, eternal – and one of the best things you can do in all the Caribbean.

Start this hike early because it will take all day to make the round trip, and you don't want to get stuck trudging the last mile in the dark.

You must hire a guide for this one. Any of the land-tour operators listed below can help you plan your hike, or you can make your own arrangements with one of the local guides in Laudat, where the trail begins. The going rate for freelance guides is EC$80, or US$30, for a group of up to four, and they work hard for their day's pay.

Start on the narrow trail leading out of Laudat. After some boulders at the trailhead, the first hour or so is fairly easily. The trail then descends to **Breakfast River**, where the real work begins as you go straight up slippery, misty, 3,000-foot **Morne Nicholls**. It's a long, hard trek, but worth it. At the top, the halfway point, you can see steam coming off Boiling Lake.

TIP

The top of Morne Nicholls is subject to very strong winds. Be sure to have a jacket in your backpack.

The descent is as hard as the ascent. Steep. Tricky. Slow. Muddy. Then you arrive on the floor of the **Valley of Desolation**.

Guides do this hike two or three times a week. Remember that when you feel the urge to whine.

Whoever named this place chose the right words! The entire valley bubbles and spits and hisses and stinks. As you look around at the barren, simmering ground, you realize how far you are from civilization – and you wonder if anyone really knows for sure that the obviously agitated earth isn't going to erupt while you're standing on it.

There's little time for anxiety or rest, because **Boiling Lake**, the prize you came to capture, is still a half-hour away. The lake is not all that big. And, since you've probably been told it is the world's second largest boiling lake (after the one in New Zealand), you expect big. It measures 270 feet across, which is quite impressive for a flooded fumarole.

Despite its surprisingly small size, the lake is awesome. The most vivid imagination couldn't create a more bizarre sight, sound, and smell. An altogether inadequate analogy is a huge, growling cauldron of bubbling grayish milk giving off fumes that smell of rotten eggs.

Guides say the hike going out is no harder than the hike coming in, but it seems so because of fatigue. Well, fatigue and mud. But, when it's all over, you can relax in the hot springs of **Titou Gorge** with an island-made Kubuli beer. You'll swear then that, although you're glad you did it once, you'll never do it again.

Middleham Falls

Three paths through Morne Trois Pitons National Park lead to Middleham Falls, which cascade 300 feet into a pool in the heart of the rain forest. None of the trails is particularly long or difficult, but the best one begins in the village of Cochrane, inland from Canefield on the west coast.

You start off crossing some streams (these can be a problem after a heavy rain). Along the way, you pass **Tou Santi**, or Stinking Hole, which is indeed a malodorous aperture. This deep crack in the ground is home to thousands of bats that have set up rather unsanitary living quarters. To add to the problem, the crevice emits sulfurous fumes from underground. The two aromas combine to create olfactory hell.

Once you get past this, bear right where the trail forks to reach magnificent Middleham Falls. If you want to get to the pool, you must climb down a steep slope. The round-trip takes about three hours.

Freshwater Lake & Boeri Lake

These lakes in the Morne Trois Pitons National Park are two of Dominica's finest. Freshwater Lake is the largest reservoir on the island, and it's possible to drive there – preferably in a four-wheel-drive vehicle because of the rugged stone road. On foot, the trip is an easy one-hour, two-mile hike from the village of Laudat.

Freshwater Lake is set in the mountains at an altitude of 2,800 feet, so the air is cool and clean. From there, Boeri Lake is about 1¼ miles to the northeast. Along the way you pass through beautiful forest with hot mineral springs and cool running streams.

Boeri Lake is about 117 feet deep and covers four acres.

Take some time to enjoy the plants and trees that grow near the lake before you head back to the village. There are excellent views of Morne Trois Pitons to the northwest and the Atlantic coast to the east. The round-trip hike from Freshwater Lake takes less than two hours. If you hike all the way from Laudat, allow about four hours.

WARNING

During dry spells, more of the rocky shoreline and its boulders are exposed. The rocks are extremely slippery and gaping spaces between them are a danger to would-be explorers.

Syndicate Trail & Parrot Lookout

A good naturalist guide will be able to spot parrots in the forest. Ask at the Forestry office in the Botanical Gardens (Roseau) for recommendations.

This easy nature trail leads you to a superb panoramic viewpoint where you may spot a rare and elusive parrot darting through the treetops. You then have the option of continuing on to the top of **Morne Diablotin**, Dominica's highest peak at 4,747 feet. You can manage the nature trail on your own, but a guide is needed for the seven-hour round-trip up the mountain.

Find the trail off Syndicate Road, which turns inland at the village of Dublanc south of Portsmouth. Try to arrive just after sunup or around dusk for the best birdwatching opportunities. The nature trail winds through beautiful rain forest at 1,800 feet for less than a mile. At a point known as Parrot Lookout, you will have a magnificent view of the Picard River Valley and the Northern Forest Reserve, where parrots and other rare birds can be observed.

From here, you – and a knowledgeable guide –can hike on to the top of the mountain. The trail is well tended and passes through forests and thick elfin woodland to a spectacular viewpoint at the summit.

Ask your guide about getting to Syndicate Falls, an isolated cascade that requires some wading and boulder jumping.

Other Hikes

If you've done all the hikes above and still need more, tackle Morne Anglais, Morne Trois Pitons or Jaco Flats.

Hire a local guide for all of these hikes. You will find one in the nearest village.

Morne Anglais stands at 3,683 feet on the south end of the island. Pick up the trail in the village of Giraudel (inland from Castle Comfort, south of Roseau). Allow an hour to walk through the orchid-covered montane forest and elfin woodland to the radio contraptions at the top of the mountain. Expect clouds and rain along the way.

Don't attempt the Trois Pitons' hike unless you are in great shape & have superb balance.

The highest of **Morne Trois Pitons'** three peaks rises to 4,550 feet, which makes it the second tallest mountain on the island.

After passing through a relatively easy-to-maneuver forest area, you come to thick woodlands with boulders. The view from the peak is great – if you survive the cuts from razor grass that grows along the trail.

The best place to find a guide to Jacko Flats is at the Paradise Bar in Belles.

Jaco Flats was a hideout for Maroons in the Central Forest Reserve, and the steps they built down the hillside are still here. Allow about two hours, round-trip. Wear a swimsuit under your hiking clothes and shoes that can get wet because part of the trail goes through the Layou River. There are great swimming spots.

Experienced Guides

Longtime visitors to Dominica swear that the best guides are found at trailheads or in nearby villages,

and good friendships sometimes come out of these chance meetings.

HIKING GUIDES	
If you wish to hire a guide or join a group hike with an established tour operator, contact one of the following:	
Ken's Hinterland Adventure Tours	☎ 448-4850; mobile 235-3517; e-mail khatts@tod.dm; www.delphis.dm/khatts.htm.
Dominica Tours	☎ 448-2638; fax 448-5680; e-mail anchorage@cwdom.dm
DAVI	☎ 449-8578; fax 448-1606; e-mail funsuninc@cwdom.dm
Ryan's Tours & Taxi Service	☎ 448-7304 or 445-8664; fax 448-6099; e-mail burtonm@cwdom.dm
HHV Whitchurch & Co. Ltd.	☎ 448-2181; fax 448-5787; e-mail hhvwitchurch@cwdom.dm
RAS Tours	☎ 448-0412; e-mail ras@delphis.dm
Charles Williams	☎ 445-7256; fax 445-7256. Mr Williams knows his native island well. Contact him for tours and information about the indigenous people and their reservation.
Castaways Beach Hotel & Dive Castaways	☎ 449-6244; fax 449-6246; e-mail castaways@netrunner.net
The Forestry Division	☎ 448-2401. Arranges hiking and mountain climbing guides. Their office is in the Botanical Gardens in Roseau.

Biking

Steep mountains make most of Dominica a tough place to ride. If you're in shape, there are some terrific trails along unused walking paths and carriage routes on old plantations and up into the hills. Full-day guided tours can be arranged for as few as four riders, or you can rent bikes by the hour or day and head off on your own.

Even if you can't manage the hills, you may want to rent a bike to peddle along the flat coastal roads in the small villages.

Rental fees run about US$11 per hour and US$32 for a full day. Guided tours include equipment and average US$85 per day. Rentals are available from **Nature Island Dive** in Soufrière Bay, ☎ 449-8181; fax 449-8182; e-mail naturedive@cwdom.dm; www.natureislanddive.dm.

Tennis

Tennis isn't big on Dominica, but courts can be found at **Reigate Hall**, just outside of Roseau, ☎ 448-4031, and **Castaways Beach Hotel**, ☎ 449-6244. There's a user fee for non-guests, and you must supply your own equipment.

Shop Til You Drop

Serious shoppers might be disappointed in the stores and products on Dominica. However, there are some wonderful locally made items that make good souvenirs. Baskets and wooden goods made by Caribs are uniquely Dominican, and you can also find island clothing, crafts, music tapes and CDs by local musicians, coconut-based soaps, rum and specialty foods. Typical duty-free bargains are available in Roseau.

Art lovers will find outstanding pieces at competitive prices in several galleries. You can invest in works by Dominica's leading artists, including Arnold Toulon, Darius David, Kelvin Kelo Royers and Earl Darius Etienne.

Respected Island Artists

Numerous artists work from studios throughout the island. They don't have regular hours (or telephones), but follow the directions given here and you might catch them at work.

Darius David is affectionately known as the Old Man of the Dominican art scene. Born on the island in 1928, he began painting in 1950 and quickly gained a reputation as a talented self-taught artist. Most of his work is based on historical and biblical events, and his paintings can be seen in many international galleries and private collections, including that of England's Queen Elizabeth II. Visitors are welcome to stop by the home studio at 8 Scotland Lane (off Goodwill Road), north of the river in Roseau.

Earl Darius Etienne was born in Massacre on Dominica's west coast and trained at the Jamaica School of Art and the Edna Manley School of Visual Arts. Look for works using his trademark technique called bouzaille or flambeau, in which he applies forms to canvas using a carbon flame. His work is represented by the Iris Dangleben Gallery in the Caribana Shop at 31 Cork Street in Roseau. You may also visit his new Gallery #4 at 4 Hanover Street in Roseau, or his studio, The Art Asylum, in Massacre. Etienne is an outspoken supporter of the arts on Dominica, and he participates in shows throughout the Caribbean, as well as in England, Switzerland and the States.

Lennox Honychurch is best known as an author and historian, but he is also an accomplished artist. He has painted murals at various sites around the island, including churches, the Calibishie marketplace, Fort Shirley Museum and the Cabrits Cruise Ship Berth. More recently, he has illustrated his own books on Dominica and the Caribbean.

Lucia John is a popular artist who works in water colors and pastels. Her works have been exhibited throughout the Caribbean and in Switzerland, Brazil and the States. Her art school and studio is at 33 Tenth Street in Canefield.

Kelo Royer is a self-taught artist who creates popular pieces using colors from nature in abstract designs that reflect his love for the land. See his work at his studio, 24 Virgin Lane, Roseau.

Arnold Toulon is the son of the late award-winning artist Francis Anthony Toulon and the brother of contemporary artist Paul Toulon. Arnold's passion is realism and surrealism, with a heavy emphasis on Caribbean style. This artistic family has made a large contribution to Dominica's culture. 54 Queen Mary Street, Roseau.

Nature inspires folks to create on Dominica, and you will find exhibits by many formally educated and self-taught artists that are not listed above. If you see something you like, buy it. Your talented but unknown artist might be the next big discovery.

Shopping in Roseau

Roseau has the largest choice of stores on the island, although handicrafts, rum, spices and coffee can be bought at various locations. Portsmouth stores may have lower prices, but there are far fewer shops in the number two town. Stick to Roseau if you're looking for specific items. If you're just browsing and hoping for a bargain, check out roadside vendors, in the Carib Territory, and even in grocery stores.

Real shoppers don't need to be told to ignore a store's curb appeal, and this is especially true on Dominica. Sometimes a weathered exterior hides a beautifully

The best grocery store in Roseau is ***Whitchurch Supermarket*** *on Old Street.* ***Brizee's Mart*** *is even larger and has a wider selection, but it's about a five-minute drive from town on the road to Canefield.*

Hours are usually 8 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday, and most stores open later (9 am) & close earlier (usually 2 pm) on Saturday. Shops are usually closed on Sundays.

laid out shop with excellent merchandise. The following are suggested for variety, quality and friendly service:

OLD MARKET PLAZA
Directly across from the cruise ship dock on Bay Street, this place is usually jumpin', especially on days when a ship is in port. Once a slave market, the cobblestone courtyard now houses vendors selling T-shirts, straw goods, batik-print clothing and handcrafted jewelry. The booths are open 8 am-5 pm Monday through Friday, and 8 am-1 pm on Saturday.

ARTWEAR GALLERY
54 King George V Street
☎ 448-3610

As the name implies, this third-floor shop specializes in hand-painted clothes using tie-dye and batik processes. Tracy Rabess, the artist, trained at Parsons School of Design in New York, and signs her paintings Antoinette. You will see many of her nature-inspired designs on display in the gallery.

COTTON BATIK HOUSE
8 King's Lane
☎ 448-3409

The designers here use 100% pre-shrunk cotton to make original art clothing for men, women and children. You can also buy wall hangings and table linens decorated with unique batik designs.

Owner Claudia Henderson is a talented singer who has performed off-Broadway. Now she spends her time creating distinctive wearable art that celebrates the beauty and culture of Dominica.

FRONTLINE BOOKSTORE
78 Queen Mary Street
☎ 448-8664; fax 449-0177

Books, music and stationery are available at this co-op shop that specializes in Afro-Caribbean culture.

You can find all of native writer Jean Rhys' books here.

Look for products made by the Bello Company. Hot sauce, jams, gourmet coffee, bay rum body lotions and aftershaves are the most popular, and custom-made baskets containing several of their products is an ideal gift to mail home.

BERNARD SILK-SCREEN
Woodstone Mall, Cork & Great George Streets
☎ 448-6783 or 448-2006

Bernard Severin designs the silkscreened products that include T-shirts, bumper stickers and plaques.

Some of the best mementos of the island display iguanas, parrots & flowers with a rain forest background.

CARIBANA
31 Cork Street
☎ 448-7340; e-mail caribana@cwdom.dm

Carla Hutchinson, a graduate of Parsons School of Design in New York, is the owner of this shop which houses the **Iris Dangleben Gallery**, named in memory of her grandmother. She designs and paints pottery, tableware, accessories and clothing. You'll find works by the island's leading contemporary artists.

Don't leave Caribana without trying a cup of the fresh coffee from the café.

ASHBURRY'S
Fort Young Hotel, Victoria Street
☎ 448-7177

This is as fancy as Dominica gets, and you can find all sorts of duty-free luxury goods in this lobby shop. Best buys are perfumes, jewelry and leather goods.

TROPICRAFTS
Queen Mary Street at Turkey Lane
☎ 448-2747; fax 448-7126

The shop on Queen Mary Street has a workroom where local women weave grass mats in the traditional Dominican style. As you watch, you'll understand why it takes about a month to weave a 10-foot

mat. Other Tropicraft outlets are located at the Prevo Cinemall on the corner of Kennedy Avenue and Old Street in Roseau, and in Portsmouth on Bay Street. Among the popular souvenirs at the stores are dolls dressed in native costume, island rum, pottery, baskets and T-shirts.

The National Development Foundation, or NDF, Small Business Complex houses 8 craft shops at 9 Great Marlborough St.

DOMINICA ESSENTIAL OILS AND SPICES
2 Jewel Street
☎ 448-2969

Island spices and spice-based products are excellent buys. This shop exports bay oil, the fresh-smelling base ingredient in popular bay rum aftershave and cologne. Stop in just to sniff the air, or pick up a few gifts.

LAND
19 Castle Street
☎ 448-3394
e-mail archipelago.dm
www.archipelago.dm

Exquisite leather products are the highlight at this shop near the Fort Young Hotel. Belts, bags, shoes, wallets, and other items are handcrafted using a process learned from natives of a small village in the Columbian Andes.

ISLAND STUFF
25 Hanover Street
☎ 449-9969

Souvenirs, beachwear, and home accessories fill this new shop near the Old Market.

★ NOTE

Sales tax is sometimes included in the item's price, but ask before you buy. Many stores add 5% to the bill if you use a credit card.

Shopping Around the Island

Canefield Airport shops offer a good variety of last-minute gifts, including fancy soaps and lotions made with island coconut oil, local rums, baskets and wood carvings.

Old Mill Cultural Centre off the West Coast Road at Canefield is open every day. (No telephone.) It features painting, basketry and pottery made by island craftsmen. The wood-carving school spotlights work by masters Carl Winston and Louis Desire and their students. Winston is best known for elaborate relief carvings depicting Dominican nature and culture. Haitian artist Desire creates three-dimensional wood carvings.

BAROON'S JEWELRY
Prevo Cinemall
☎ 449-2888

This shop has a wide selection of jewelry using 14k and 18k gold and both precious and synthetic stones. Some of the pieces are imported, while others are made by local artisans. The shell and coral jewelry make fine souvenirs of Dominica.

AFRO-CARIB
Floral Gardens Hotel, Concorde
☎ 445-7636

Only topnotch merchandise is carried in this hotel boutique specializing in Carib Indian and African-Créole crafts. Wood carvings, straw items and pottery make up most of the stock, but there are also some body-care products and food.

BUTTERFLY BOUTIQUE
Papillote Wilderness Retreat, Trafalgar Falls Road
☎ 448-2287

You expect originality and quality here, and Butterfly Boutique won't disappoint. There's a fine variety of

art and crafts created by Dominican artists, including lovely mahogany sculptures by Louis Desire. There's also distinctive jewelry, magnificent quilts and superb beauty products.

Carib Crafts

Driving through Carib Territory, stop at the shops and roadside stalls selling unique handicrafts made by the indigenous people using methods handed down over many generations. Baskets made from the outer skin of the larouma reed are strikingly dissimilar from those made of grass or palm leaves on other islands. Carib baskets have a tighter texture and a distinct black, brown and beige pattern. Dominican mats and hats made of vertiver grass are considered the best in the Caribbean.

After Dark

Sunset is a big deal on Dominica, and you'll find residents and visitors positioning themselves late in the afternoon for the best view of the sun as it sinks into the Caribbean Sea. Waterfront bars and seaside restaurants advertise their sunset views more aggressively than their menus, and everyone who's been on the island more than a few days has a favorite spot from which to watch the daily phenomenon.

After dark, you'll have the most fun hanging out with locals at the bars and village street parties. Dominica has recently gained a bit of fame for its music, and you'll hear (or feel) the boom-boom beat of soca and zouk pouring from terraces and open windows all over the island.

Many of the hotels and restaurants present live entertainment on a weekly schedule throughout the year. During festivals – Carnival, Dive Fest, the World Créole Music Festival, Independence Day – the entire island celebrates.

Clubs, Pubs & Bars

For everyday parties, head to one of the following places:

The Warehouse, in Checkhall north of Canefield Airport, is a dance club inside a converted sugar mill that rocks until dawn on weekends. Music is coordinated by DJs from nearby islands, and there's always a crowd, especially late on Saturday nights. ☎ 449-1303.

Smiley's Bar, at Wykie's La Tropical on Old Street in Roseau, often has a jing-ping band playing. The Friday happy hour (5-7 pm) is popular. ☎ 448-8015.

The Shipwreck, on the waterfront north of Roseau in the Canefield industrial area, is a reggae hangout on weekends. Partying starts early on Sunday. ☎ 449-1059.

Q Club, at the corner of High Street and Bath Road in Roseau, plays a mix of local and international music and serves a good variety of drinks. Show up on Friday night after 10 pm if you want to meet new people. ☎ 448-2995.

Symes Zee, on King George V Street in Roseau, is famous for its live jazz on Thursday nights. Get there early if you want to snag a prime seat, although the action doesn't really pick up until after 10 pm. ☎ 448-2494.

Best Places to Stay

There are fewer than 800 rooms for rent on Dominica, and most are in guesthouses and small lodges. There are no big international resorts, and some of the most popular accommodations are in newly designated eco-inns. With very few exceptions, all accommodations are run by friendly islanders who go out of their way to welcome you.

Some visitors care more about location and services than fluffy towels and fine furniture, so every attempt has been made to list a wide variety of choices in every price range on all parts of the island.

TIP

A few private cottages are listed. Take special care in reserving one of these, since cleanliness and comfort-level are subjective qualities on which you and your host may not agree.

Quality varies. Some of the nicest proprietors proudly offer sagging mattresses & barely adequate plumbing.

Location, Location, Location

The island is small, but getting from one side to the other is slow going due to narrow, mountainous roads. You may want to plan your trips first, then choose your lodging based on convenient access to those destinations. If you're a diver, the west coast is by far a better choice than the east. If you want privacy, off-the-beaten-path hikes and unspoiled wilderness, think about renting a cottage hidden in the trees on a cliff overlooking the Atlantic.

See pages 240-41 for a list of good questions to ask about the property you are considering.

Pricing

Price ranges are based on a double room during high season (excluding the 5% government taxes and 10% service charges). A few places add an additional 5% fee for credit card payments.

TIP

Published rates don't reflect much difference between high and low seasons, but you can probably get some discount from May through November, unless a special event is taking place.

You'll need a car and a kitchen if you plan to stay outside the main tourist areas.

Be sure to ask about deposit & cancellation policies. Some hotels require 14 days notice for refunds on canceled reservations.

The following price scale is intended as a planning guide so you can check on properties within your budget. Remember that suites and apartments will usually be more expensive than double rooms at the same establishment.

ALIVE! PRICE SCALE	
Deluxe	More than $150
Expensive	$100-$150
Moderate	$75-$100
Inexpensive	Less than $75

Rental Agency

Nature Island Destinations
PO Box 1639, Roseau
☎ 449-6233; fax 449-7100
e-mail nid@cwdom.dm
www.natureisland.com

This island-wide rental agency inspects hotels, guesthouses and private cottages all over the island, and can help first-time visitors find the best accommodations in all price ranges. You don't pay any additional costs for their services. However, be perfectly clear about your expectations and needs so they can match your preferences with available lodging.

They also arrange transportation from the airport, car rental, sightseeing and diving/hiking tours. The owners, Colin and Cecily Lees, are British transplants and have a wealth of information about their adopted island.

In & Around Roseau

The area code for Dominica is 767.

FORT YOUNG HOTEL
Victoria Street, Roseau
32 rooms; 18 junior suites; 3 one-bedroom suites
☎ 448-5000; fax 448-5006
In the US ☎ 800-223-6510
e-mail fortyoung.cwdom.dm
www.fortyounghotel.com
Expensive

Dominican history is set between the thick stone walls of this 18th-century fort turned luxury hotel. The inner courtyard has the original flagstone floor,

and heavy greenery gives the bar area a tropical feel. Recently, the original 32-room hotel has been developed to add 18 junior suites and three one-bedroom suites on the edge of the Caribbean. These additions and spiffy refurbishing have turned this once just-okay tourist-class hotel into a sparkling beauty.

The Fort Young Hotel is within walking distance of downtown.

The junior suites each have two queen-sized beds, a balcony and a sitting area with a desk, computer-modem extension and a refrigerator. The one-bedroom corner suites feature a wraparound balcony, small kitchen, 1½ bathrooms (including a whirlpool tub) and king-size bed in the separate bedroom.

All 32 rooms in the original wing of the hotel have been renovated and have air-conditioning, ceiling fan, balcony, cable TV, coffee maker and a variety of bed sizes.

A new jetty allows dive trips and whale-watching excursions to leave from the hotel, and a new health/beauty spa provides a gym and massage services.

THE GARRAWAY HOTEL
Place Heritage, One Bayfront, Roseau
31 rooms, including 11 suites
☎ 449-8800; fax 449-8807
In the US: 800-223-6510
e-mail garraway@cwdom.dm
www.delphis.dm/garraway.htm
Expensive

The Garraway family owns and runs this five-story pale-green hotel across the street from Roseau's Bayfront promenade and cruise ship pier. There's an interior courtyard and rooftop terrace as well as a street-level duty-free shop, bar and restaurant. Everything was built in 1994; this is one of the island's newest hotels. All 31 rooms and suites are

comfortable and have air-conditioning, ceiling fans, plush carpet, king-size beds, cable TV and a view of the Caribbean.

SUTTON PLACE HOTEL
25 Old Street, Roseau
Eight rooms, including three suites
Continental breakfast
☎ 449-8700 or 448-4313; fax 448-3045
e-mail sutton2@cwdom.dm
www.delphis.dm/sutton.htm
Moderate

Sutton Place is a stylish new inn with a past. Back in the 1800s, a Dominican built a home for his family in the heart of Roseau, on the spot where the Sutton now stands. The house was sold some years later to another Dominican family named Harris, who turned the structure into a guesthouse in the 1930s. Mother Harris ran the well-known inn until 1979, when Hurricane David tore across the island demolishing everything in its path and leveling Sutton Guesthouse. Determined not to let David have the last word, the tenacious Harris family rebuilt on top of the original foundation using traditional island styles.

Today, the bright and elegantly outfitted inn is popular with business and leisure travelers who want to be near Roseau's conveniences.

Members of the Harris family oversee every detail, and the staff knows each guest by name.

The rooms feature fine furniture, fresh fabrics and wonderful Caribbean art. Standard rooms have a private balcony, air-conditioning, ceiling fan, cable TV and hair dryer. Three suites on the top floor offer fully-equipped kitchens, sitting areas, antique-style furniture and polished hardwood floors. A light breakfast is served in the common lounge area each morning, and guests are encouraged to relax in the quiet courtyard garden.

WESLEEANN APARTEL
8 Ninth Street, Canefield
12 apartments and one suite
☎ 449-0419; fax 449-2473
In the US: ☎ 800-822-3274
e-mail wesleeann@cwdom.dm
Expensive

This six-story apartment-hotel looks oddly out of place in the hills outside Roseau. Yet, once you get used to it, the rather utilitarian building is most welcoming, and it has a load of extra amenities – such as balconies with panoramic views of the ocean. Long-term business travelers love the roomy homelike apartments. Families and groups traveling together get the privacy of their own rooms combined with the benefit of common sitting areas and money-saving kitchen facilities.

Wesleeann is only five minutes by car from Roseau, in a residential area near Canefield Airport and the cross-island Transinsular Road that leads inland to many of the island's best tourist attractions. Each of the one- , two- , and three-bedroom units are air-conditioned and feature private balcony, ceiling fans, cable TV and modern kitchens with microwaves. In addition, the complex provides hotel-type amenities such as daily maid service, an exercise room and a full-service tour desk.

HUMMINGBIRD INN
Morne Daniel, Roseau
10 rooms
☎ 449-1042; fax 449-1042
e-mail hummingbird@cwdom.dm
www.delphis.dm/eihbird.htm
Inexpensive

Jeane James, an American-educated Dominican woman and hummingbird enthusiast, owns and operates this homey eco-inn perched on a cliff overlooking

the sea between Roseau and Canefield. (Find it at the end of a steep driveway south of the gas station on the main coastal road.) Rock-A-Way Beach is a short walk down the hill, and the inland cross-island road is nearby.

The smallish rooms with private baths are not air-conditioned, but hurricane shutters let in cooling breezes and there are also ceiling fans. While the inn is island-style – tile floors, wooden ceilings, no TVs or phones – there are terrific tropical touches, such as hammocks and a garden full of hummingbirds and iguanas. If you want to get a bit fancier, check into the honeymoon suite, which features a queen-size four-poster bed, private patio and kitchenette.

Castle Comfort

Several hotels line up along the coast just south of Roseau in an area called Castle Comfort, on the main road to Soufrière and Scotts Head. Many of them have dive shops and special dive/tour packages. For the most part, accommodations are basic, but comfortable in a beachy sort of way. They make up for this lack of glamour by running excellent dive trips and island-wide tours using good equipment and experienced, well-trained staff.

ANCHORAGE HOTEL
Coast Road, Castle Comfort
32 rooms
☎ 448-2638; fax 448-5680
In the US: Robert Reid Associates, ☎ 800-223-6510; fax 402-398 5484
e-mail anchorage@cwdom.dm
www.anchoragehotel.dm
Moderate

The Armour family owns and operates this popular hotel favored by divers and boaters. The plain rooms are air-conditioned and have private bath, balcony and cable TV. Boats can moor right outside, and there's a swimming pool, squash court, seaside restaurant and tropical-style bar where international adventure fans trade stories. An on-site dive center offers PADI courses and underwater excursions led by knowledgeable guides.

The Anchorage throws a poolside BBQ buffet with live music & their infamous rum punch on Thursday nights.

CASTLE COMFORT LODGE
Coast Road, Castle Comfort
15 rooms
☎ 448-2188; fax 448-6088
In the US: ☎ 888-262-6611
e-mail dive@cwdom.dm
www.castlecomfortdivelodge.com
Moderate

Fans of this cozy lodge come back repeatedly for the homey atmosphere and good dive talk. Most of the guests are on dive-package vacations and enjoy sitting around the hot tub or dinner table going over their day's adventures with owners Derek and Ginette Perryman.

Derek Perryman is an experienced, friendly diver. He enjoys showing his underwater world to guests through his well-run dive center, Dive Dominica.

The rooms are simple and air-conditioned. Those located away from the water's edge have cable TV.

THE EVERGREEN HOTEL
Coast Road, Castle Comfort
16 rooms
Breakfast
☎ 448-3288; fax 448-6800
e-mail evergreen@cwdom.dm
www.delphis.dm/evergreen.htm
Expensive

Set on the coast, this family-run hotel is the poshest of the Castle Comfort choices. It has an older stone building and a new annex, and rooms in both are air-conditioned and comfortably spacious. The newer

Meals at the seaside restaurant are prepared using fresh produce and include veggie choices.

wing is fittingly decorated in bright colors and flowery prints, while the older one features rooms with homey quilts and wall hangings. All rooms have a phone and cable TV, and some offer sea views from private balconies. Guests enjoy a freshwater pool, marvelous sunsets over the ocean and cool night breezes.

Mid-West Coast

CASTAWAYS BEACH HOTEL
On Méro Beach, near St. Joseph
26 rooms
☎ 449-6244; fax 449-6246
In the US: ☎ 888-227-8292; fax 954-351-9740
e-mail castaways@cwdom.dm
www.castaways.dm
e-mail reservations: castaways@netrunner.net
Expensive

You'll need a car if you're staying between Roseau and the town of Portsmouth, but the road is good, with little traffic.

Castaways is a good choice if you want to be on the beach. It's conveniently located midway between the island's two largest towns.

Each Sunday, Castaways has a beach BBQ with live music by local bands.

This hotel comes very close to being a true resort. It's set in a lush five-acre garden on a gray-sand beach with a dive shop, watersports center, boat dock, beachside bar, tennis court and tour desk. Owner Bill Harris bought the property about 40 years ago and has spent many hours designing, planning and overseeing every aspect of the hotel and grounds.

Rooms are large and have balconies, ceiling fans (only six rooms are air-conditioned) and cable TV.

LAURO CLUB
On a cliff top at Grand Savanne, near Salisbury
10 self-contained cottages
☎ 449-6602; fax 449-6603
e-mail ambertjoseph@yahoo.de
www.delphis.dm/lauroclub.htm
Inexpensive weekly/monthly rates (no daily rates)

Lauro's outdoor bar and grill overlooking the pool and sea is a popular hangout. There's no beach here, but you can walk down steps to the water's edge and swim between big boulders. The solar-powered bungalows all have fine views from their private verandahs. Each unit has a bedroom, bathroom, living area with a pull-out bed, ceiling fans and fully equipped kitchen. It's not luxurious here, but everything is clean and modern.

A Swiss couple opened the hotel in 1992, and they cater largely to French guests who book villas for a month at a time. But Americans won't feel out of place here. The staff is bilingual and many of the bar and restaurant guests are islanders or professors from nearby Ross University – a very diverse cliental.

SUNSET BAY CLUB
Gueule Lion Point, Batalie Beach, north of Salisbury
15 rooms and suites
Breakfast only or all-inclusive
☎ 446-6522; fax 446-6523
e-mail sunset@cwdom.dm
www.sunsetbayclub.com
Expensive

Sunset is one of the newest hotels on the island. It sits on prime property directly on the beach at the mouth of the Batalie River. Run by the charming and friendly Dutrieux family from Belgium, who speaks four languages, including English. Everything is

ultra-clean (even the *pillows* are washed between guests) and modern.

Water in the bathrooms at Sunset Bay is solar-heated (backed up by an automatic generator).

All rooms have ceiling fans, mosquito nets above the beds and private terraces. The spacious honeymoon bungalow features a king-size bed. International and Créole cuisine is served in the restaurant, and an à la carte menu is available for anyone not on the all-inclusive plan. The hotel's amenities include a swimming pool, sauna and massage services.

In & Around Portsmouth

PICARD BEACH COTTAGE RESORT
On the beach in Prince Rupert Bay
Eight cottages
☎ 445-5131; fax 445-5599
e-mail pbh@cwdom.dm
www.delphis.dm/picard.htm
In the US: Utell, ☎ 800-44-UTELL
Expensive

PORTSMOUTH BEACH HOTEL
Next to Picard Beach Cottage Resort
170 rooms
Inexpensive
All contact details are the same as for the Picard Beach Cottage Resort, above.

Picard Beach Cottages and Portsmouth Beach Hotel are sister establishments under the same management. They are located near each other on Dominica's longest sand beach, less than a mile south of Portsmouth on Prince Rupert Bay.

Much of the older section of Portsmouth Beach Hotel is rented out to students at Ross University, but newly constructed rooms nearer the water's edge are available on a daily basis for bargain prices. All rooms are modest and clean, with air-conditioning or ceiling fans.

Picard Beach Cottages are new deluxe accommodations built and furnished in traditional 18th-century island style. Each has a bedroom, sitting area, kitchen and a verandah outside the front door.

Screened windows let in the breeze but not the mosquitos.

Both properties are on an old coconut plantation and tropical vegetation grows rampant on the grounds. There's a restaurant, bar, pier and swimming pool. Diving and whale-watching trips can be arranged with Anchorage Dive Centre. Cabrits National Park, Indian River and hiking trails are nearby.

COCONUT BEACH HOTEL
On Picard Beach on Prince Rupert Bay
22 rooms, bungalows, apartments and suites
☎ 445-5393; fax 445-5693
e-mail cocobeach@netscape.net
Inexpensive

This hotel suffered some hurricane damage several years ago and has rented mostly to Ross University students since then. However, 12 new one-bedroom units are available to visitors at low rates. Every apartment has a kitchen, living/dining area, air-conditioning or ceiling fans, and cable TV. The beachside bar and restaurant are popular with locals and tourists.

Scotts Head & Soufrière

PETIT COULIBRI GUEST COTTAGES
In the hills above Soufrière/Scotts Head
Eight cottages, two studio rooms and two studio suites
☎ 446-3150; fax 446-3151
e-mail petitcoulibri@hotmail.com
www.delphis.dm/petit.htm
Deluxe

You must find a way to see this beautiful place, even if you don't stay here. It is truly one of the most marvel-

ously remarkable spots on earth. You'll need a four-wheel-drive vehicle and strong bladder control to make it up the teeth-jarring, rut-riddled half-mile track that passes for a private road to the cottages, but do not miss this experience.

Petit Coulibri has been featured in international newspapers, on TV and in magazines, praised as the island's choicest lodging.

At the end of the eternal driveway up the mountain, you find a glorious swimming pool seemingly floating above the earth with the Atlantic in one direction and the Caribbean in the other. Owners Barney and Loye Barnard and their daughter, Amie, live in the home next to the pool, and have created a fabulous retreat for guests on their property.

Call ahead to make sure Petit Coulibri has reopened after its extensive renovation.

Each of the cottages has 1½ baths, a bedroom with a double bed and a smaller room with two twin-size beds. There's a complete kitchen, and the Barnards will organize meals to be eaten on their verandah or delivered to the cottage.

All electricity and water are supplied by ecologically-smart solar systems and cisterns. Even telephone messages are transmitted by radio signal. Sheep, vegetables and herbs are raised on the property, which was once a working plantation. More than 60 species of birds have been seen among the flowers and tropical plants that grow abundantly on the grounds.

The smaller studios are less expensive, but still perfectly charming.

Diving and sightseeing tours can be arranged with operators just down the hill in Soufrière. But you may find that once you're settled into your mountaintop home, you have no desire or reason to leave.

GALLETTE'S SEASIDE COTTAGES
Coast Road, Soufrière
☎ 449-8181; fax 449-8182
e-mail naturedive@cwdom.dm
www.natureislanddive.dm
Moderate

The energetic couples that runs Nature Island Dive also owns these cottages by the sea outside Soufrière,

and they are designed to meet a diver's every need. The units, one above the other, are self-contained, surprisingly elegant and very spacious. The upper unit has one bedroom and a queen-size sofa bed in the living room. The lower one-bedroom apartment has a queen-size sleeper sofa in an alcove off the living room. Both are equipped with full kitchens and living/dining rooms. The large verandah across the front of the bungalow offers a view of the setting sun. This is the perfect happy-hour spot after a day of diving.

HERCHE'S PLACE
(Formerly Gachette's Seaside Lodge)
Coast Road, Scotts Head
10 rooms
☎ 448-7749
e-mail herches@cwdom.dm
www.delphis.dm/herches.htm
Inexpensive

This is a great place at a budget price. Set across the road from a pebble beach full of colorful fishing boats in the center of Scotts Head, Herche's is ideal for divers and convenient to all types of adventure tours. The rooms are plain, but clean and comfortable with private baths, ceiling fans and cable TV.

The Sundowner Café, the on-site restaurant and bar, serves good food and drinks and is popular with folks on a budget.

Way Off the Beaten Track

ZANDOLI INN
Off Coast Road at Stowe Estate, Roche Casse-Stowe
Five rooms
Continental breakfast
☎ 446-3161; fax 446-3344
e-mail zandoli@cwdom.dm
www.zandoli.com/
Expensive

This nature lover's dreamworld is perched 80 feet above Grand Bay on six secluded acres on the far southern coast. You'll need a car if you plan to tour the island from here, but chances are you'll never want to leave this little piece of garden paradise.

Linda Hyland and Tony Hall created the Mediterranean-style inn with a strong sense of ecological responsibility. There's no air-conditioning, telephones or TVs, but you won't miss them. You'll be entertained by the spectacular views from your patio instead of TV, and you'll shower in solar-powered hot water in your private bathroom. Each of the five spacious guest rooms has a balcony that lets in cool breezes, and there are mosquito nets and fans.

Meals are served on the patio or indoor dining room, and there's a plunge pool with bar service. You can spend days hiking the trails in and around the inn, and it's possible to snorkel in sheltered water off the rocky coast. If you should decide to venture out, Linda and Tony will help you plan sightseeing tours and hiking or diving trips.

Along the East Coast

CARIB TERRITORY GUESTHOUSE
Crayfish River, near Salybia in Carib Territory
Eight rooms
☎ 445-7256; fax 445-7256
e-mail caribgh@hotmail.com
Inexpensive

Charles and Margaret Williams are the friendly owners of this guesthouse in the only Carib reservation in the Caribbean, right in the heart of the island's gloriously wild east coast. Rooms are basic and some share a bath, but you can get good home-cooked Créole meals if you let Margaret know in advance. From here, you can shop for handmade crafts, hike out-of-the-way trails, and hire Charles for an in-depth tour of his little piece of paradise. There's no better way to truly live the culture of Dominica.

POINTE BAPTISTE GUESTHOUSE
Pointe Baptiste near Calibishie
Two houses (one sleeps eight, the other sleeps two)
☎ 445-8495 (phone/fax); staff, 445-7379
e-mail guinguette@cwdom.dm
www.delphis.dm/pointeb.htm
Manager, Annick Giraud: ☎ 245-2560 (cellular)
Inexpensive (based on one couple in the small house and three couples sharing the large house)

These two houses are located on a 25-acre estate above a pretty beach. Both are charmingly old-island with a weathered look and well-worn furnishings. The main house has a fabulous view of Pointe Baptiste's famous red-rock cliffs and the Atlantic from the front

The estate has an interesting history and has attracted many well-known people, including Princess Margaret.

verandah. Inside, there's a living room, library, dining area, full kitchen and three bedrooms. The smaller house is a whitewashed cottage with twin beds, a little kitchen and a patio. Maid and cooking services can be arranged with manager Annick Giraud.

RED ROCK HAVEN HOMES
Pointe Baptiste near Calibishie
Three villas
☎ 448-2181; fax 448-5787
Expensive

These three modern villas with one and two bedrooms are located next to the estate containing Pointe Baptist Guest House, and the neighbors share a secluded golden-sand beach. The cottages have a spectacular view of the Atlantic from their terraces. The insides are decorated in bright fabrics and cooled with fans. There's also a swimming pool, sauna and small gift shop on-site.

FLORAL GARDENS
Concord
20 rooms, suites and apartments
Breakfast
☎ 445-7636; fax 445-7333
e-mail floralgardens@cwdom.dm
Moderate

Floral Garden's newer rooms are more spacious than those in the older building.

If you're looking for something different, Floral Gardens is just the place. This Swiss-chalet look alike is tucked into lush tropical greenery at the base of the rain forest on the border of Carib Territory. It is inland from the coast on the road that follows the river from Pagua Bay. Over the years, owners Lily and O.J. Seraphin have enlarged the original inn so that it now includes a botanical garden, swimming pool, workout gym, spa, boutiques and a restaurant overlooking the river. Rooms are simple, comfortable and have private baths and fans or air-conditioning.

The cottage apartments have kitchens. This is a favorite with nature lovers and honeymooners.

WIND BLOW ESTATE
Calibishie
Three villas
☎ 352-799-7353 (Lewis Watkins in the US); fax 352-796-8943
e-mail contact@windblowestate.com
www.windblowestate.com
Expensive

Private villas on the ruggedly gorgeous northeast coast offer up-to-date conveniences for a self-catered vacation. Each of the one- and two-bedroom units has a ceiling fan, private veranda and sundeck, a living area with a futon sleeper-couch, a well-equipped kitchen, and one or two modern bathrooms. You'll be tempted to simply sit and enjoy nature, but nearby hiking and watersports will call you to action. If you stay a week, the seventh night is free during both high and low season.

Mountain Lodges, Hotels & Inns

EXOTICA COTTAGE RESORT
Gommier in the Roseau Valley, southeast of Roseau
Eight cottages
☎ 448-8839 or 448-8849; fax 448-8829
e-mail exotica@cwdom.dm
www.exotica-cottages.com
Expensive

You'll need a four-wheel-drive to get comfortably up the twisting road that climbs Morne Anglais outside Roseau. The road ends 1,600 feet above sea level in a remote flower-filled garden surrounding the Exotica Cottage Resort, where eight lovely Caribbean-style wood-and-stone villas are tucked into the foliage. The

villas are solar powered, with all the modern conveniences, including kitchens.

The friendly owners, Fae and Athie Martin, are prominent citizens actively involved in Dominica's agricultural and conservation programs. They invite guests to get-down-'n-dirty in their organic farm that supplies the on-site **Sugar Apple** restaurant. If farming isn't of interest, visitors can hike old hunting trails through the surrounding rain forest or swim in nearby mountain streams.

Each cottage is decorated in bright tropical colors, with rattan furniture, cable TV, fans and cool tile floors. Bedrooms have two single beds, and additional people can sleep on a trundle bed in the large living area.

SYMES-ZEE VILLA
Bayack near Laudat in the Roseau Valley
15 rooms and suites
☎ 448-3337; fax 448-4476
e-mail symeszeevilla@hotmail.com
www.delphis.dm/eisymesz.htm
Inexpensive

Jazz musician, Timothy Symes, who owns Symes-Zee Eatery in Roseau, also owns this isolated hideout. He built it on family property 13 years ago after returning from New York, where he lived long enough to learn the meaning of rat race. For him, Symes-Zees Villa is the ideal remedy for stress-worn minds and bodies, and his staff is trained to provide peace and calm along with efficient service.

The small hotel has magnificent views from its perch 3,010 feet above sea level near Middleham waterfalls. Rooms are simple, clean and comfortable, and there's a restaurant/bar for those who can't summon the energy to drive 15 minutes into Roseau.

ROXY'S MOUNTAIN LODGE
Laudat
11 rooms
☎/fax 448-4845
e-mail roxys@cwdom.dm
www.delphis.dm/eiroxys.htm
Inexpensive

Roxy's was designed for guests who love wild nature. It sits 2,000 feet above sea level, less than five miles from Roseau, and is near trails that lead into Morne Trois Pitons National Park. The simple double rooms have individual verandahs and bathrooms, and the common areas encourage friendly gatherings. Experienced guides are available to take you to nearby sites, such as the Valley of Desolation, Boiling Lake and the summit of Morne Macaque. Afterwards, you can rejuvenate in the warm mineral springs and icy cold waters that converge at Titou Gorge, and enjoy delicious Créole food in the lodge's restaurant.

THE REIGATE HALL HOTEL
Morne Bruce, inland from Roseau
17 rooms, suites and apartments
☎ 448-4031; fax 448-4034
e-mail reigate@cwdom.dm
www.best-caribbean.com/reigatehall/indexm.html
Moderate

This quaint hotel sits snug against a mountainside above Roseau with a magnificent view of the city and western coast. Elegant touches accent this former manor house. Air-conditioned guest rooms have large tiled bathrooms with bidets and private balconies with panoramic views. Suites have refrigerators, wet bars and jacuzzis.

Reigate Hall's two-bedroom apartment is designed for three guests, but has no kitchen.

You'll enjoy the specially blended tropical drinks in **Penny Farthing Pub**, which is known for its hospitality. In the restaurant, Dominican dishes are prepared by excellent chefs (American and European

cuisine are served as well). A swimming pool, tennis court and sauna are on site, and all the adventure of the national park is nearby.

ITASSI COTTAGES
Morne Bruce, inland from Roseau
Three cottages
☎ 448-4313, 449-8700; fax 448-3045
e-mail sutton2@tod.dm
www.delphis.dm/itassi/home/htm
Inexpensive

Itassi Cottages are owned by the same folks who run Sutton Place.

If you want to be near the capital but away from the crowds and noise, consider renting one of these cottages up the hill from Roseau in the residential neighborhood of Morne Bruce. The two-bedroom, two-bath chalet sleeps six; the one-bedroom, one-bath unit accommodates four; and the studio cottage is suitable for two.

For the price, you can't beat the amenities and space.

Each old-island-style bungalow has a terrific panoramic view all the way to Scotts Head on the southern coast. You can cook meals in the fully equipped kitchens or take a quick drive into town for meals. Furnishings include ceiling fans, TVs and telephones.

CHEZ OPHELIA
Roseau Valley
Five cottage apartments
☎ 448-3438 or 448-3061; fax 448-3433
e-mail mariem@mail.tod.dm
www.delphis.dm/eichez.htm
Moderate

Ophelia's latest CD is called "The Rhythm of the Times."

These colorful cottages are on the Copt Hall Estate, five minutes by car from the center of Roseau. Dominica's talented and vivacious "First Lady of Song," Ophelia, oversees the operation of the teal-trimmed white bungalows while continuing to release new music.

Each of the apartments has a double bed, a sleeper sofa in the living area, an equipped kitchen and private verandah. Guests here have less than a 15-minute drive to the major inland attractions, such as Trafalgar Falls, Wotten Waven and swimming in the Roseau River.

ROSEAU VALLEY HOTEL
Copt Hall, Roseau Valley
11 rooms and apartments
☎ 449-8176; fax 449-8722
e-mail rosevale@cwdom.dm
www.delphis.dm/eirvh.htm
Inexpensive

You'll have new island-style accommodations at this sun-yellow two-story inn with brightly painted balcony railings. The spacious rooms have queen or double beds, cable TV and modern bathrooms. Apartments are similarly equipped and include kitchen facilities, but you can also eat in the hotel's **Waterhole Restaurant**. Car rentals and tours can be arranged through the front desk.

PAPILLOTE WILDERNESS RETREAT & NATURE SANCTUARY
Trafalgar Road, Roseau Valley
Eight rooms
☎ 448-2287; fax 448-2285
e-mail papillote@cwdom.dm
www.papillote.dm
Moderate

Papillote's owners, Anne and Cuthbert Jno-Baptiste, make it perfectly clear that this is not – nor does it aspire to be – the Dominican Hilton. What it is, however, is a wonderfully secluded sanctuary in the midst of perhaps the best botanical garden in the Caribbean.

In the past few years, Paillote has been featured in countless international publications, praised for its ecological approach to tourism.

Since Papillote was blown to the ground along with most everything else on the island during Hurricane David in 1979, the inn is fairly new and constantly undergoing improvements. All rooms are comfortably rustic and decorated with local arts and crafts. The Waterfall Cottage has two bedrooms, two baths and a small kitchen – ideal for families or friends traveling together.

But the emphasis is on nature, and the great outdoors is intentionally more gorgeous than anything inside. When you ask for a tour of the property, it's the gardens and natural hot springs that are pointed out rather than anything indoors. Trails throughout the property have been recently upgraded, and a small structure has been converted into a bird-watcher's house.

SPRINGFIELD PLANTATION HOTEL
Springfield, inland from Canefield
15 rooms, apartments and cottages
☎ 449-1401 or 449-1224; fax 449-2160
e-mail springfield@cwdom.dm
www.delphis.dm/springfield/index.html
Inexpensive

If you love nature and are willing to overlook a fair amount of shabbiness, this is an excellent lodging choice. The main wooden building was built as a plantation home in the 1840s, and it has undergone multiple additions and renovations. Unless you plan to bring a large group along, you'll be primarily interested in the five large rooms located on the second floor of the main house, which are outfitted with four-poster double beds. Other rooms and cottages offer dormitory-style sleeping for up to 60 persons.

An environmental group called SCEPTRE – Springfield Centre for Environmental Protection – is head-

quartered here, and visiting groups often stay on the grounds when they come to the island for field work. However, you don't need to be part of an organization to feel welcome and at home here. Nature lovers are invited to enjoy the trails, streams, wildlife and tropical vegetation on the 200 acres surrounding the guesthouse. There's no air-conditioning, but all rooms have fans and private bathrooms.

An on-site restaurant at Springfield serves delicious meals as well as fresh-squeezed fruit juices.

Eco-Inns of Dominica

Several hotels and guesthouses have formed this association to promote responsible tourism and quality accommodations for visitors. All members are small-scale properties with friendly owners and managers that invite guests to enjoy, conserve and protect all the natural resources on the island.

Membership is growing, but the following were participants at the time of this book's publication:

- Chez Ophelia
- Roseau Valley Hotel
- Papillote Wilderness Retreat
- Exotica Cottage Resort
- Symes-Zee Villa
- Roxy's Mountain Lodge
- Hummingbird Inn
- Springfield Plantation Guesthouse
- Floral Gardens

Camping

Overnight camping is not encouraged anywhere on the island. It is illegal to camp in the national parks.

Best Places to Eat

Dominica has some excellent cuisine and adventurous dining options, but don't expect the outstanding French dishes served by neighboring Martinique and Guadeloupe. Most of the meals are basic Créole made with just-picked produce and tangy spices. Islanders use everything the land provides and sometimes put together unique dishes made from unwritten recipes handed down through many generations.

You can get large, inexpensive meals in small family-run cafés throughout the island. Some of these places are well established and serve dependably wholesome fare. These are listed below. Many more open and close with the seasons or at the whim of the owner. You'll have fun discovering them.

TIP

Don't be afraid to try small cafés and snack shacks. They often serve the most genuinely Dominican foods prepared with loving care from generations-old family recipes. In addition, you can pick up interesting stories and useful information from the cooks and servers – who just may be the same person.

Hotels and guesthouses usually welcome outside diners, but call ahead to be sure. In most cases, the chef will need a few hours' notice in order to prepare enough food for extra guests.

> **TIP**
>
> During peak tourist season and special events, it's a good idea to make dinner reservations early in the day at both large restaurants and small cafés.

Dress

In general, restaurants are informal, and many serve meals on outdoor patios. During the day, islanders and tourists wear shorts and sandals everywhere, but swimsuits are out of place inside even the most casual cafés. At dinner, men usually wear slacks and shirts with collars. Women are most comfortable in slacks or a sundress.

On the Menu

Dominicans tend to cook without recipes, and the same dish at different restaurants may taste surprisingly dissimilar. For instance, a dish called *provisions* may be made with any of several root vegetables including yams, pumpkin, and dasheen. The cook then flavors the mashed vegetables with whatever spices are available.

Callaloo soup is a popular appetizer or light lunch. It's made from tender leaves found at the center of the dasheen plant (also known as taro), and tastes some-

Don't be surprised to find this starchy dish served with rice or potatoes, or both!

what like spinach, but varies with the selection of spices used for flavoring. Richer versions of this soup are made with coconut milk; crabmeat or dumplings are common additions.

Bananas and plantains are usually part of every meal. The ripe fruit is made into fritters or flambéed; green bananas and plantains are served boiled or fried. If you see ton-ton on the menu, it refers to a West African dish made from mashed plantains or breadfruit.

★ DID YOU KNOW?

Dominicans make wonderful drinks from the juice of every fruit. The best are passion fruit, guava, gooseberry, cherry and apricot. Some of the more unusual include soursop, pawpaw, seamoss, beet and gingerbeer. Try them all. Most are said to have excellent health benefits.

Lambi is conch, a very popular seafood that shows up in one form or another on most menus.

Crab is usually the black land variety that Dominicans serve stuffed and spicy.

Lobster is a spiny creature caught among the coral reefs near shore, not the large-claw type that is popular in New England.

Chatu is octopus, a surprisingly good choice if cooked well.

All of these seafood meals typically come with a delicious salsa-like condiment made from peppers, cucumbers, tomatoes and onions.

Another item that appears seasonally on most menus is "**mountain chicken**." While it tastes similar to chicken, it is actually frog. This large, leggy amphibian, known as crapaud (cra-PO), can be caught only during winter months. It is a protected species and is considered a delicacy. Only the back legs are eaten, and they look and taste something like tiny, white-meat chicken legs.

For lunch or a snack, try a roti. Similar to tortilla wraps, these delicious treats are filled with spicy chicken, beef, fish or vegetables.

If frog legs are a turn-off for you, you probably won't like manicou or agouti, either. A **manicou**, you may remember from the wildlife section, is a small opossum, and an **agouti** is a large rodent similar to a guinea pig. Both are served either stewed or smoked, which does a fine job of hiding their strong, gamey flavor.

Perhaps the best choice, especially at smaller cafés, is freshly caught fish. The most popular varieties are **dorado** (also called dolphin – the fish, not the mammal), **ton** (tuna), **zorfi** (garfish), **bonito**, **grouper** and **snapper**. You'll find them cooked all sorts of ways and served with various sauces. When paired with local vegetables, they make a dependably delicious meal for even picky eaters.

Pricing

The following guide will give you an idea of what you can expect to pay for a complete dinner for one person, excluding drinks, taxes and tips. Lunch prices will be lower.

ALIVE! PRICE SCALE	
All prices are given in US dollars	
Expensive	More than $30
Moderate	$20-$30
Inexpensive	$10-$20
Bargain	Less than $10

Most eateries accept major credit cards.

Menu prices usually are listed in Eastern Caribbean dollars.

Roseau

KING GEORGE STREET

King George Street runs from the waterfront through town to the Botanical Gardens and is lined with island-style buildings that house shops, grocery stores and inexpensive to moderately-priced cafés.

TIP

If in doubt about where to eat, walk up this busy road and follow the crowds into one of the colorful eateries. Chances are good that you won't leave hungry or disappointed.

Raffoul's Food Court, ☎ 448-4145, is part bakery with outstanding breads (you won't be able to resist the cinnamon rolls), and part deli. The deli counter offers rotisserie chicken, sandwiches, quiches, pizzas and other quick-meal choices. Open 7 am-8:30 pm Monday-Thursday; 7 am-11:30 pm Friday and Saturday; and 4 pm-8 pm on Sunday.

Callaloo, ☎ 448-3386, makes an exceptional callaloo soup that's hearty enough for a meal. In addition, there's West Indian lunch and dinner specials and homemade desserts. The grilled lobster in lime butter sauce is exceptional.

If you're in town for the Saturday morning market, stop by for the popular weekend breakfast special. Open Monday-Saturday, 7:30 am-10 pm; Sunday, 3:30-10 pm.

CornerHouse Information Café, ☎ 449-9000, on the second-floor of a corner building, serves up sandwiches and such. Internet access is offered. Place your

order, then sign on at a rate of EC$8 for a half-hour of DSL browsing. Open 8 am-10 pm Monday, Tuesday, Thursday; until midnight on Wednesday and Friday; and 8 am5 pm on Saturday. Happy Hour begins at 4 pm on Friday.

The Orchard, ☎ 448-3051, is a shady courtyard serving traditional burgers and sandwiches as well as local specialties such as black pudding (a fiery blood sausage) and mystery-meat pies. At dinner (week nights only) there are good seafood choices. Open Monday-Friday, 8 am-10 pm; Saturday, 8 am-4 pm.

Symes-Zee Eatery, ☎ 448-3337, is a fine place for traditional Dominican fare, but the real attraction is the Thursday night entertainment provided by top Jazz musicians, including owner Timothy Symes (who owns Symes-Zees Villa in the mountains above Laudat). Open Monday-Saturday, 9 am to midnight.

If you must have an American food fix, **Kentucky Fried Chicken** is located at the corner of Great George and Marlborough Streets, ☎ 448-1717.

LA ROBE CREOLE
3 Victoria Street
☎ 448-2896; fax 448-5212
Créole
Noon-10 pm
Closed Sunday
Expensive

Call La Robe early for dinner bookings.

Possibly the most popular restaurant in the capital city. The callaloo soup is rich with coconut milk, and the freshly-caught fish is grilled with an excellent combination of spices. Waitresses wear colorful madras skirts and headdresses; waiters are decked out in white shirts with red cummerbunds and bow ties. They're friendly and cheerful, but can be inattentive on a busy night. No matter. The food and atmosphere make up for less-than-snappy service. The

dining room is casual and relaxed with stone walls, wooden rafters and floors, madras tablecloths and plenty of tropical plants. Save room for one of the outstanding desserts that are homemade every day.

MOUSE HOLE SNACKETTE
3 Victoria Street
☎ 448-2896
Snacks
8 am-8:30 pm
Closed Sunday
Bargain

The Mouse Hole doesn't accept credit cards.

The clever name describes this take-out snack bar perfectly. It's a small hole-in-the-wall in the basement of La Robe Créole Restaurant that serves wonderful, inexpensive munchies such as rotis, sandwiches, fruit juices, quick-breads and salads. This is the ideal stop for picnic supplies, but you can also eat at a small indoor counter.

Mousehole Too Café offers the same type of menu at 10 Kennedy Avenue.

GUIYAVE
15 Cork Street
☎ 448-2930; 448-1722 (cellular)
Créole meals and standard breakfasts/lunches
8 am-3:30 pm
Closed Sunday
Inexpensive

This 100-year-old site houses a downstairs patisserie and an upstairs restaurant. In the bakery, you can buy excellent French and West Indian sweets, breads, sandwiches and fruit juices made fresh by owner Hermina Astaphan. The restaurant specializes in standard Créole favorites, and on Saturday the chef cooks the locally popular stew known as "goat water." You can hang out here all day just to people-watch. In the morning, order a plate of French toast and sit out on the green-and-white balcony overlooking Roseau. Then linger over a second cup of coffee while you go over plans for the day's activities. At lunch time, join

local workers in the dining room for burgers and sandwiches, or enjoy a drink at the bar, where you may pick up sightseeing tips from fellow travelers.

CARTWHEEL CAFÉ
On the Bayfront, Mary E. Charles Blvd.
☎ 448-5353
Snacks, breakfast and lunch
7:30 am-3:30 pm
Closed Sunday
Bargain

The Cartwheel Café is clean, sunny, friendly and popular.

Directly across from the ship terminal near the landmark Royal Bank of Canada, this small eatery is a pleasant place to enjoy a delicious meal. Choose from sandwiches, soups, salads, omelettes, and other standard fare served in an historic building with stone walls; windows open directly onto the waterfront street.

The staff will remember you after just one visit.

BALISIER
Garraway Hotel on Bayfront
☎ 449-8800
7:30 am-10:30 pm
Local/Créole
Inexpensive/Expensive

Fussy eaters will appreciate this chance to eat familiar foods in such beautiful surroundings.

You have a wonderful view of the Caribbean all the way to Scotts Head from this second-roufloor dining room and outside balcony. There's probably no better place on the island to enjoy a full breakfast of fresh fruit juice and cooked-to-order egg and meat dishes. At lunch and dinner, the menu features goat, pork and fish boldly seasoned with island spices or gently dressed with continental sauces. The vegetarian options are creative, well prepared and beautifully presented.

On Fridays a West Indian and Créole buffet lunch is offered between 12:30 and 2:30 pm. This is an excel-

lent way to try new foods and discover your own favorites.

*The **Ole Jetty Bar**, downstairs on Bayfront, is a popular spot for exotic drinks at sunset.*

SUTTON GRILLE
Sutton Place Hotel, 25 Old Street
☎ 449-8700; fax 448-3045
7 am-10 pm
Créole
Expensive

The best beverage to accompany Créole food is one of the island's very own beers, Kubuli – it's smooth, fresh & brewed with German know-how and pure island waters.

The stone walls of this hotel restaurant have withstood 100 years of island weather. Now they enclose a courtyard and indoor dining room that serves hearty West Indian specialties and perfectly grilled fish and steaks. At lunch, a buffet of meats, salads and vegetables is popular with local office workers. Breakfast choices range from continental-style juice and rolls to island-style spiced fish and boiled bananas. Recently, the basement has been converted into the intimate **Cellar's Bar**. There's a limited à la carte menu, but the main feature is tropical drinks made of freshly-squeezed juices and local rums.

While the mood is often quiet and relaxed, occasionally a rowdy crowd will gather to watch the 50-inch TV or play a competitive round of darts.

MARQUIS DE BOUILLE RESTAURANT
Fort Young Hotel, Victoria Street
☎ 448-5000
7 am-10 pm
International/Créole
Moderate/Expensive

Try the well-priced lunch buffet, served weekdays, or the Friday night Caribbean buffet, featuring live music.

The menu here leans toward the exotic, which fits perfectly with the surroundings in this newly expanded old waterfront fortress. Trendy singles and romantic couples meet poolside at **Balas Bar** for cocktail hour before moving on to the dining room. Hotel guests and special-occasion diners tend to fill the candlelit restaurant in the evenings, but a mixed crowd shows up

for the theme buffets at lunch during the week. New construction has added two additional eateries. The **Boardwalk Café** is open during the day for light meals and snacks. The **Waterfront Restaurant** which features a lunchtime buffet and a dinnertime international menu.

PORT OF CALL
3 Kennedy Avenue
☎ 449-9646 or 448-2910
8:30 am-11 pm
Mixed menu
Moderate

Happy Hour at Port of Call is every Friday, 6 to 9 pm.

Try this newcomer for take-out or dine-in favorites from hamburgers to seafood. The full-service bar is a popular gathering place for the after-work crowd and fatigued tourists who enjoy local Kabuli beer and potent rum punches.

The menu includes a variety of local and international dishes, with fish and mountain chicken among the specialties. In addition, the restaurant features an extensive wine list with choices to accompany every type of meal.

COCORICO
Restaurant, Gourmet Grocery, Wine Store (aka Ti' Caz)
Bayfront at Kennedy Avenue
☎ 449-8686; fax 449-9774
e-mail cocorico@cwdom.dm
www.cocorico-wine.com
Restaurant hours: 8:30 am-10 pm
Store hours: 8:30 am-4 pm Monday-Friday;
8:30 am-2 pm Saturday; closed Sunday
French/Créole
Inexpensive/Expensive

You'll find gourmet foods and wines at this combination shop and restaurant. Look for the striking blue roof and charming Créole-style house near the ferry

terminal on the waterfront. The restaurant serves all day, beginning with cheesy omelets for breakfast, progressing to croissant sandwiches at midday, and ending with exotic French dishes in the evening. In the shop, you'll discover fresh baguettes, imported chocolates, pâté, French hams, fine cheeses, and a large selection of international wines. The friendly and knowledgeable staff speak Créole, English, French, and Spanish.

REIGATE ESTATE
Morne Bruce, suburb of Roseau
☎ 448-4031 or 448-4032
7 am-10 pm
International/Créole
Moderate/Expensive

Plan to linger once you get to the Reigate – the views are terrific.

You must drive up a bumpy mountain road to reach this restaurant at Reigate Hall Hotel outside the capital, but the trip is a wonderful sightseeing adventure, and the food worth the trouble.

The kitchen turns out good international cuisine such as coq au vin, but spicy Créole meals are the specialty. Try the thick callaloo soup, garlic-laced seafood or spicy mountain chicken. All are delicious. For drinks, stop by **Penny Farthing Pub**, where the bartender mixes island favorites made with fruits and local rum.

Castle Comfort

Hotels just south of Roseau cater to divers and adventurers with big appetites. Each is a bit different, but all emphasize friendly service and hearty portions of ultra-fresh cuisine.

OCEAN TERRACE
Anchorage Hotel
☎ 448-2638; fax 448-6800
7 am-10:30 pm
International/Créole
Moderate

You'll know it's Thursday when you see the crowds headed for the poolside barbecue buffet at the Anchorage Hotel. For US$20 you can chow down on ribs, chicken, fish, salads and desserts while listening to live music. Other weekly events include Grill Night and Seafood Night. At other times, local, international and vegetarian dishes are served à la carte at the seaside restaurant.

CRYSTAL TERRACE
Evergreen Hotel
☎ 448-3288 or 448-3276
7:15 am-11 pm
Créole
Moderate

Dependably good Dominican cuisine served at the water's edge makes this large open-air restaurant a favorite with travelers. Inside, crystal chandeliers hang above a modern bar that specializes in tropical drinks. Creatively prepared local produce adds zest to the meat, chicken and fish meals which lead off with spicy soup or fresh salads.

For dessert at Crystal Terrace, try the homemade cake with ice cream.

CASTLE COMFORT RESTAURANT
Castle Comfort Lodge
☎ 448-2188
Breakfast, 7:30-9 am; lunch, noon-2 pm; dinner, 7-8:30 pm
Local cuisine
Moderate

Reservations are a must if you want to join the friendly group at these family-style spreads. Fixed-

The clientele at Castle Comfort is made up mostly of divers on package tours.

price meals are freshly prepared using family recipes. You'll get a friendly welcome, as long as you let them know to expect you.

Scotts Head & Soufrière

Business owners in this sea-oriented area of Dominica are adventurous types, and the food they enjoy and prepare for others is an imaginative blend that reflects their attitude about all aspects of island life. The following serve outstanding cuisine.

SUNDOWNER CAFÉ
West Coast Road, Scotts Head
☎ 448-7749
e-mail herches@cwdom.dm
Noon-10 pm Tuesday-Sunday
Closed Monday
Local specialties
Inexpensive

Vegetables and fruits used at the Sundowner come from a chemical-free garden.

Sit in this open-air café and watch for dolphins playing offshore while you enjoy recently caught fish prepared by owner/chef Greg Herche. He cooks whatever is fresh – lobster, prawns, crab, octopus – and you can order it grilled, fried, sautéed, Créole-style or blackened. The friendly staff will help you decide which you'll enjoy most. If you're not in the mood for seafood, you can order chicken, steak or lamb. Every meal is fresh, healthful and served with homemade bread.

If you're in the area late in the afternoon, order a rum punch and enjoy the sunset from this waterside spot.

Happy Hour runs from 6 to 10 pm.

In & Around Portsmouth

Heading north from Roseau on the main coastal road, you'll pass some pleasant hotel restaurants. In Portsmouth itself, there are a few cafés on Bay Street, but the choices are limited. **Bound-to-Groove** and **Casa Ropa** are two such places that have been recommended. Mango's, also on Bay Street, is reviewed below.

ALMOND TREE RESTAURANT
Castaways Beach Hotel
Méro Beach on West Coast Highway
☎ 449-6244; fax 449-6246
7 am-9:30 pm daily
Caribbean/International
Inexpensive/Moderate

Walk through the hotel lobby to this beautiful seaside restaurant that offers a variety of island specialties. You may want to stop first at the **Rhum Barrel** bar to sip a tropical drink. Then, ask for a table nearest the beach. Fish dishes dominate the menu, and the island's spices, fruits and vegetables are used to create a variety of dinner choices.

Try the mango chicken with a tangy fruit-and-spice stuffing at Castaways.

On Sunday afternoons, from noon to 5 pm, locals and visitors gather on the beach for Castaway's weekly cookout. Favorites from the grill include lobster and saucy ribs.

LAURO CLUB
West Coast Road near Salisbury
☎ 449-6602; fax 449-6603
6 pm-9:30 pm
French and West Indian
Moderate

Bar conversation at Lauro is usually a stimulating mix of island gossip and tourist tales, so order a drink and listen in.

The location between Roseau and Portsmouth makes this a popular dinner spot for both travelers and local residents. Plan to eat here on either Wednesday or

Saturday night, when they fire up the patio grill and cook al fresco to the accompaniment of live music. The patio sits above the swimming pool and overlooks the sea. The ambiance is spectacular.

SUNSET BAY CLUB
Batalie Beach, south of Portsmouth
☎ 446-6522
Créole and International
10 am-7 pm
Dinner reservations suggested
Moderate

Belgian owners Roger and Marcella Dutrieux and their daughter Katia recently opened this all-inclusive resort steps from secluded Batalia Beach, south of Portsmouth. Try to dine here even if you're not an overnight guest. The menu is varied and the food is delicious. Enjoy an exotic rum drink at the bar before or after your meal.

Fresh fruits and vegetables are organically grown on site, and the chef uses whatever is ripe to prepare gourmet meals with European touches.

COCONUT BEACH HOTEL RESTAURANT
Picard Beach on Prince Rupert Bay
☎ 445-5393; fax 445-5693
8 am-11 pm
Mixed menu
Moderate/Expensive

Tasty side dishes with island spices accompany all entrées.

The beach and boating crowd gathers here for well-priced sandwiches and popular rum drinks with names such as Kamikaze and Dominican Blues. In the evening, a moderately priced dinner menu offers grilled fish, mountain chicken, lobster, prawns and crayfish. If you're in the mood for a steak, filet mignon is available.

LE FLAMBEAU
Picard Beach Cottage Resort
☎ 445-5142
7 am-10 pm
Mixed menu
Moderate

This casual restaurant sits near the water and attracts an eclectic mix of hotel guests, beach bums and yacht owners. Local and international cuisine is on the menu, but there's also take-out food and snacks. Burgers and sandwiches are most popular with day-trippers looking for a quick bite or picnic provisions, and the potent drinks draw regulars in the evening. The open-air restaurant faces the beach and serves a well-priced variety of standard fare for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

MANGO'S
Bay Street, Portsmouth
☎ 445-3099
8 am-11 pm (later on weekends)
Créole
Moderate

This yellow-and-white building in the middle of town is easy to spot. Islanders and visitors keep Peter Pascal's place jumping from breakfast through dinner. It offers casual Caribbean decor, a central location, good prices and tasty Créole food.

Try Mango's crayfish or mountain chicken, or fill up on spaghetti if you're craving a more familiar meal.

On a pleasant evening, sit outside on the porch that surrounds a large mango tree and enjoy a Kubuli beer or tropical drink.

SISTER SEA LODGE
Picard Estate, midway on Prince Rupert Bay
☎ 445-5211
8 am-10 pm daily
Créole
Inexpensive

Harta and Elka are the two sisters who run this guesthouse and restaurant right on the beach. If

you're in the area, stop to enjoy a drink at the seaside bar or stay for a meal on the comfortable patio. Fruit trees surrounding the property provide shade and produce for many of the beverages and side dishes. Seafood, fresh from nearby waters, is the specialty, and you can choose from lobster, crayfish, crab and octopus. Créole-style mountain chicken is a good option.

If you don't have plans for the afternoon, order a rum punch and stretch out in one of the hammocks. This is true paradise.

Elsewhere on the Island

Pack a picnic & bring some snacks when traveling to remote areas of the island.

Small family-run restaurants are scattered throughout the island's mountainous interior and along the sparsely populated east coast. In general, they are the dining rooms of guesthouses and inns that provide meals for overnight patrons. Most welcome additional tourists when they have enough help and provisions in the kitchen, but advance reservations are essential.

PAPILLOTE RAINFOREST RESTAURANT
Trafalgar Falls Road, four miles east of Roseau
☎ 448-2287
10 am-10 pm
Vegetarian and Créole
Moderate

Bring a swimsuit and enjoy a pre- or post-meal soak in one of the hot mineral pools (EC$5).

Don't miss this retreat in the Roseau Valley near the double Trafalgar waterfalls. Cuthbert Jno-Baptiste oversees the planning and preparation of food in the thatch-roofed restaurant that overlooks a 14-acre garden tended by his wife, Anne. Eggs come from the resort's own chickens, and the fruits and vegetables are from the garden. You'll enjoy huge salads, steaming vegetables and island specialties such as callaloo

soup, Créole-style flying fish and marinated chicken cooked in banana leaves.

FLORAL GARDENS RESTAURANT
Concord Village
☎ 445-7636; fax 445-7333
7:30 am-9 pm
Vegetarian/West Indian
Moderate

Floral Gardens sounds too "tearoom" for this hotel restaurant that occupies both sides of the road about three miles inland from Carib Territory. Flowers and greenery are everywhere, but inside the decor is rustic and the food is hearty. Backpackers fill up on agouti and crapaud when they return from treks through the adjoining rain forest, and newlyweds snuggle over a shared vegetarian dish. It's a place where everyone feels relaxed and welcome.

Live music and barbecue on Sunday evenings.

LA GUINGETTE DE CALIBISHIE
East Coast Road, Calibishie
☎ 445-7783
8 am-11 pm
West Indian
Inexpensive/Moderate

A nice selection of French wines accompanies a menu that features fresh seafood and steaks prepared with gourmet sauces. Tables are set on a terrace overlooking the ocean, which makes this one of the most romantic spots for lingering over cocktails. Live music plays on Saturday evenings, when barbecue is featured for dinner.

Ask if Floral Gardens' owner Oliver (O.J.) Seraphin is in. He's a friendly host who enjoys talking about the gardens as well as his island home.

? Dominica A-Z

The area code for Dominica is 767.

ATMs

There is a 24-hour ATM at the Royal Bank of Canada, across from the cruise ship terminal on Bayfront in Roseau.

Banking

Banks are open Monday through Thursday from 8 am to 3 pm and Friday from 8 am to 5 pm.

Books & Videos

The more you know about a destination, the more you'll enjoy it. The following books and videos are the best sources of information about Dominica's history, culture and natural beauty.

Dekouve, Domnik. ***A Nature Island Safari***. 115-minute video with comprehensive coverage of all parts of the island and its marine areas. Order by sending a check for US$26 to Kon Lanbi Productions, c/o SPAT, PO Box 268, Roseau, Commonwealth of Dominica. ☎ 448-4377; fax 448-2308; e-mail spat@cwdom.dm; www.delphis.dm/spat.htm. No shipping charges are added.

Gilkes, Martha W. ***Diving Guide to the Eastern Caribbean***. MacMillan.

Honeychurch, Lennox. ***Dominica: Isle of Adventure***, third edition. MacMillan. A travel guide.

Honeychurch, Lennox. ***The Dominica Story***. MacMillan. A history of the island.

Kincaid, Jamaica. ***The Autobiography of My Mother.*** Plume. Fiction about a Carib woman, set on Dominica.

Pattullo, Polly, & Ann Jno-Baptiste (owner of Papillote Wilderness Retreat). ***The Gardens of Dominica***. Papillote Press. History and botanical information.

Rhys, Jean. ***Wide Sargasso Sea***. Penguin. Fiction set in Jamaica written by Dominica's most celebrated author. Her autobiography, *Smile Please*, includes scenes from her life in Dominica.

Climate

Average daytime temperatures range from 75°F to 85°F year-round.

It is cooler, wetter and windier up in the mountains.

The driest months are January through April. Roseau and the west coast receives about 85 inches of rain annually, while the mountainous interior rain forest gets more than 340 inches per year.

Credit Cards

Major credit cards are accepted by most hotels, shops, restaurants, tour agencies and car rental companies in Roseau and Portsmouth. Gas stations require cash. Shops and cafés in smaller towns may not accept credit cards, and some businesses add a 5% fee to prices if you do not pay by cash.

Currency

Dominican currency is the Eastern Caribbean dollar (EC$), which exchanges at EC$2.67 to US$1. Banks offer the best exchange rate, and US dollars are widely accepted.

Departure Tax

The departure tax, which is charged everyone over the age of 12 after 24 hours on the island at both airports, is EC$30 plus an Environmental Levy of EC$4, for a total of EC$34 or US$14. Save time and money by having the correct amount in EC$ when you check in for your flight home.

Drinking Water

Tap water is safe, but the island bottles water from mountain springs, and you may prefer its taste.

Drugs

Police strictly enforce Dominica's zero-tolerance laws. Don't get caught with illegal substances.

Electricity

Outlets are three-prong European-style, 220/240 volts AC, 50 cycles. US appliances will require a transformer and plug adapter.

Emergencies

☎ 999 for police, fire department and ambulance.

Entry Requirements

Citizens of the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada may visit Dominica for up to six months by presenting a return or onward ticket off the island and some form of official photo ID, such as a valid driver's license. Visitors from France may present a Carte d'Identité for visits of up to two weeks. Visitors from other countries must present a valid passport in addition to a return or onward ticket. Since laws may change, obtain current regulations from a knowledgeable travel agent or the Consulate of the Commonwealth of Dominica, ☎ 212-599-8478.

Hospitals

Grand Bay Health Center. . . . . ☎ 446-3706
Marigot Hospital. . . . . ☎ 445-7091
Portsmouth Hospital . . . . . ☎ 445-5237
Princess Margaret Hospital. . . . . ☎ 448-2231

Investing and Business Opportunities

Generous tax incentives are offered to anyone interested in participating in the guided develo pment of tourism and industry on Dominica. Contact **Domini, Inc**., the government-appointed agent located in Florida, ☎ 954-340-8881; fax 954-340-2902; e-mail domini@domini-inc.com; www.domini-inc.com.

Language

English is the official language, but French-Créole is spoken among the residents.

Maps

The British Ordinance Survey map is available at the tourist office at the Old Market in Roseau for EC$22. Less detailed maps are distributed free of charge at tourist information booths in both airports, at all cruise ship terminals and at major hotels.

Marriage Requirements

At least one of the two people wishing to be married must be on Dominica for two days before applying for a license. Each person provide a birth certificate, passport-size photograph and proof of citizenship. If the bride or groom have been married before, they must provide proof of divorce or the death of their former spouse.

Political Status

An independent nation and a member of the British Commonwealth.

Population

Approximately 82,000 people live on the 290-square-mile island; most are of African ancestry.

Taxes

Hotels assess a 5% tax. A 3% sales tax is levied on purchases and a 10% service charge is added to most hotel and restaurant bills.

Telephone

Dominica's area code is 767, and you can call the island from the US by dialing 1 + 767 + seven-digit local number.

For directory information while on the island, dial 118.

Dial 0 for assistance with international calls from the island.

Calling cards are available at gift shops, telecommunication offices and the Roseau library. To make a call, insert the card face up into the slot on the front of the telephone.

These colorful phonecards can be used as bookmarks.

Time

Daylight saving time is not observed. Dominica operates on Atlantic Standard Time, which is one hour ahead of Eastern Standard Time.

Tourist Information & Resources

Tourist Information Offices

Dominica Tourist Information Office
Old Market Plaza, Roseau
☎ 448-2045; fax 448-5840
e-mail ndc@cwdom.dm

Dominica Office of Tourism
10 East 21st Street, Suite 600
New York, NY 10010
☎ 212-475-7542; fax 212-475-9728
e-mail dominicany@msn.com
www.dominica.dm

Dominica High Commission
1 Collingham Gardens
London SW7 0HW
England
☎ +44-207-835-1937; fax +44-207-373-8743

Dominica Hotel and Tourism Association
PO Box 384
Roseau, Dominica, WI
☎ 448-6565; fax 448-0299
e-mail dhta@cwdom.dm

Information booths are located at Melville Hall and Canefield Airports.

Information by Internet

www.dominica.dm
www.delphis.dm
www.turq.com
www.cakafete.com
www.sensay.com

St. Lucia

Overview

The 2,600-foot twin peaks of the Pitons on Saint Lucia's southwest coast are among the most beautiful sights in the Caribbean. They soar above picturesque fishing villages, stunning beaches, bubbling sulphur springs, towering waterfalls and a dense rain forest. Hidden on the hills, among the wild, lush greenery, are world-class resorts, ultra-romantic inns and cozy lodges.

Still untamed and relatively unknown as a tourist destination, Saint Lucia is one of the Windward Islands of the Lesser Antilles. It sits midway down the Eastern Caribbean chain between Martinique and Saint Vincent, north of Barbados. From one end to the other, Saint Lucia measures only 27 miles long, and is 14 miles across its widest section. One main road twists down the entire west coast, swings around the southern tip, then heads north up the eastern shoreline, making most of the 238-square-mile pear-shaped island easily accessible. Occasionally, this loop road branches off across mountains and cuts through the dense rain forest to remote sites, but it's virtually impossible to get lost.

Most of the population lives in the north around Castries, the contemporary capital and main port. Inland, the mountainous land is covered by a thick jungle-like rain forest that gives way to sprawling banana plantations. The gorgeous southern coast is

sparsely populated and is dominated by the volcanic Pitons that rise straight up out of the ocean.

★ DID YOU KNOW?

A 19,000-acre national forest protects most of the island and is home to the endangered, but recovering, bright green jacquot parrot.

Since the early 1990s tourism has slowly, but decisively, taken a firm hold on the island. Luxury resorts and first-rate marinas line much of the coast, but Saint Lucia has learned from its neighbors that overdevelo pment can be worse than no development. High-rise hotels are not permitted, eco-tourism is encouraged, and most natural resources are strictly protected.

Castries is the bustling modern capital and main seaport. Fires have destroyed many historic sites, but a few landmarks and attractive colonial buildings remain. **Morne Fortuné**, the hill of good fortune, rises over the south side of the city, offering panoramic views of the town and harbor. The town of **Soufrière** is quite a contrast to Castries. It is a sleepy fishing village, engagingly out of step with modern times, that sits on the southwestern coast in a dormant volcanic crater.

Mount Soufrière, a dormant volcano near the town of Soufrière, is called the "drive-in volcano" because it is actually possible to drive a vehicle into the crater. Natural **sulfur springs** that flow there are rumored to have therapeutic properties, and people often bathe in the waters. Farther south, the twin peaks of the **Pitons** loom on the horizon, dwarfing everything around them. **Gros Piton** is shorter, but wider, and

rises to 2,460 feet. The leaner **Petit Piton** stands 2,619 feet above sea level. **Vieux Fort**, at the southernmost point of the island, is one of the oldest settlements. Miles of palm-lined white-sand beaches extend along the coast just outside the colonial town.

North of Castries, well-known **Rodney Bay** sits in a protected lagoon. The 83-acre man-made harbor is the largest and best-equipped marina south of Saint Thomas, and serves as host to many boating events. It is also a popular shopping area and the site of some of the island's best restaurants.

Off the southern coast, the **Maria Islands** form a nature reserve and bird sanctuary that protects two indigenous species found nowhere else in the world: the innocuous Couresse grass snake and the Maria Islands ground lizard. The small **Frigate Islands**, off the Atlantic coast, are home to the magnificient frigate bird and are a favorite hangout for nature lovers and wildlife photographers.

Sand on Saint Lucian beaches ranges from jet-black to pristine white, and the island has a plethora of breathtakingly beautiful sites. **Choc Bay** is a long, sandy stretch shaded by coconut palms along the northwestern coast. Its calm waters attract swimmers from the hotels located near Castries. **Marigot Bay**, midway down the Caribbean coast, is a dream come true. It's secluded, surrounded on three sides by steep hills and shaded by swaying palms. Beaches don't come any better than this.

Pigeon Island National Park, reached by a causeway from the island, draws curious explorers. Indians lived there before it became a hideout for pirates, then a British military base. Now, it's a recreation area with picnic sites and sandy beaches.

Anse des Pitons lies in a dramatic location between the Pitons. **Anse Couchon**, a striking black-sand beach, must be reached by boat, and is therefore a famous retreat for romantic couples. **Cas en Bas** is the best beach for windsurfing, and divers find schools of colorful fish near **Anse Chastanet**.

Friday nights are for partying, and you'll want to join the fun at the weekly jump up at **Gros Islet**. Shortly after sunset, the streets are closed to traffic, bands set up their equipment on makeshift stages, and cooks fire up the barbecue grills on their front lawns. Locals show up to do some serious partying, and visitors soon feel right at home. The music continues during the week as hotels and clubs feature steel bands, jazz groups and zouk musicians (see page 50 for descriptions of all kinds of Caribbean music).

Shoppers will find plenty of attractive buys at stores, galleries and boutiques around Castries. Local arts and crafts, as well as a tempting selection of fresh herbs and spices, draw browsers into the **Castries Market**. Tourists also like the modern facilities at **Pointe Seraphine**, a large Spanish-style mall and duty-free shopping complex not far from the city.

Saint Lucia has a broad selection of exciting activities for every type of vacationer. Watersports are popular, and the large hotels have equipment for windsurfing, waterskiing and boating. Quick-drop coastlines and lovely reefs offer excellent snorkeling and scuba diving. The rain forest preserves in the mountainous interior feature some of the best hiking and bird-watching in the Caribbean. In addition, the island has top facilities for golf, tennis, sailing and horseback riding.

A Brief History

The first people to live on the paradise island of Saint Lucia were peaceful, artistic Arawak Indians, who were indigenous to the entire Caribbean. (See "Life of the Arawaks & Caribs" in the *Introduction*.) They most likely arrived around 200 AD and supported themselves by hunting, fishing and farming. About 800 AD, the Caribs made an aggressive appearance, conquered the Arawaks, set up villages, and named the island *Hewanorra,* Land Where the Iguana is Found.

Discovery

Many historians believe the island was first sighted by Europeans when Juan de la Cosa, one of Christopher Columbus's navigators, spotted land in that area in 1499. However, others allege that Christopher Columbus himself landed on Saint Lucia on December 13, 1502. Records show that the island is not within the routes known to be explored by Columbus, and some scholars credit Spanish explorers with *discovering* the island later in the 16th century.

For years, St. Lucians celebrated Discovery Day on Dec. 13. However, the day has recently been renamed National Day.

The French, Dutch & English

By 1520, Saint Lucia was marked on a Vatican globe, but at that time it was merely a hideout for pirates and other bad chaps who wreaked havoc on legitimate businessmen trading in the islands. The most infamous was François le Clerc, whom the Spanish called Pie de Palo and the French labeled Jambe de Bois because of his wooden leg.

Old Peg-Leg le Clerc and his cohorts were joined on the island in 1600 when the Dutch military arrived and built a bastion at Vieux Fort. Europeans didn't try to actually colonize Saint Lucia until a few years later, and even that was an accident. In 1605 a British ship called *Olive Blossom* blew off course, and her 67 passengers came ashore to seek refuge. For some reason, the Caribs sold some land and huts to the English refugees, allowed them time to settle in, then turned inhospitable. Most of the new colonists were killed by their hosts, and the rest were forced off the island.

A larger British group came over from Saint Kitts in 1638, but they didn't fare much better, and were driven off Saint Lucia within two years. No one tried again until the French arrived early in the 18th century. With characteristic diplomacy, they worked a deal with the natives and established the town of Soufrière in 1746.

The English found it unacceptable that the French were safely living it up on this island they had failed to control, and decided to make another claim on the land. The Caribs were no match for genuine European aggression, and soon the natives were wiped out or resettled elsewhere. With the indigenous people out of the way, the scene was set for almost 200 years of French-English battles, treaties, retreats, advances and, in between, rampant development. Saint Lucia was volleyed back and forth between France and England an absurd total of 14 times until the Treaty of Paris put a stop to competition and officially granted Britain controlling power in 1814.

Over the next century, Saint Lucia settled into a stable, multi-cultural democracy. Once the English had official authority, they were indifferent about changing French customs. Thus, language, religious preference, place names and cultural traditions remained

decidedly French for the first half of the 19th century. Even today, the citizens of this English island speak a French-based patois that flows like thick honey from the back of the throat. They celebrate Catholic saints' days, and live in villages named Soufrière, Vieux Fort and Gros Islet.

African Influences

A third culture also played a significant role in the island's character, that of Africa. Europeans brought African slaves onto the island by the boatload to work their plantations. While French and English customs were mingling among one segment of society, African traditions established a stronghold in another. Descendants of former slaves constitute the largest percentage of the island's present population, and their proud heritage has survived to become the basis of St. Lucian culture today.

When slavery ended in 1834, plantation owners brought East Indians to the island as indentured servants. Their numbers were small compared to other nationalities, and their culture has almost disappeared. However, a significant East Indian community still lives in the area around Vieux Fort, and their foods and cooking methods are a popular addition to the island's cuisine.

Modern Times

Since February 22, 1979, Saint Lucia has been an independent state within the British Commonwealth. Currently, Queen Elizabeth II, as head of state, designates a resident governor-general to head the island's democratic government.

Getting to St. Lucia

Documentation

Citizens of the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada may visit St. Lucia for up to six months by presenting a return or onward ticket off the island and some form of official photo ID, such as a valid driver's license. Visitors from all other countries must present a valid passport and visa in addition to a return or onward ticket. Since laws may change, obtain current regulations from a knowledgeable travel agent or the Embassy of Saint Lucia in Washington, DC, ☎ 202-364-6792.

The area code for Saint Lucia is 758.

TIP

The US Department of State recommends that citizens carry a valid passport to facilitate all overseas travel and reentry into the US.

Arrival by Air

Saint Lucia has two airports and good air links from North America, the UK, and other Caribbean Islands. Most international jet flights land on the 9,000-foot runway at **Hewanorra International Airport** (☎ 454-6249) near the town of Vieux Fort on the remote south coast. This modern, well-equipped airport once served as a US Air Force base and has stands for five aircraft.

The Hewanorra Airport is over an hour from most tourist areas, and taxi fares are high. Consider renting a car.

Regional air carriers and BWIA's flights from North America and Europe land on the 6,200-foot runway at **George Charles Airport** (☎ 452-2596), which is located two miles from the capital city of Castries. Formerly known as Vigie Airport, the facility was renamed in 1997 in honor of the first Chief Minister of the island. (Charles held office from 1960 to 1964.)

Visitors from North America have a wide choice of flights to St. Lucia, either direct or through Puerto Rico, Barbados or Jamaica.

Air Canada and Air Jamaica fly into the international airport near Castries, while small inter-island carriers and American Eagle land at the regional airport. BWIA has flights into both airports.

European visitors may fly from London Gatwick on British Airways or from London Heathrow, Frankfurt, and Zurich on BWIA. Other airlines, such as Britannia, British Caledonian, and Virgin Atlantic, also provide scheduled and chartered flights from the UK. Scheduling and pricing change rapidly, so travelers should contact a travel agent, tour operator, or the airlines for flight information.

Within the Caribbean, American Eagle, BWIA, and Air Jamaica provide the most extensive service.

TIP

If you want to do some island hopping, check with BWIA, and Air Jamaica about free stopovers on islands where the carrier makes intermediary stops.

The area code for Saint Lucia is 758.

AIRLINE INFORMATION	
Air Canada	☎ 888-247-2262 (in the US and Canada); 452-2550 (on St. Lucia); www.aircanada.ca
Air France	☎ 800-237-2747 (in the US); 800-667-2747 (in Canada); 452-2811 (on St. Lucia); www.airfrance.com
Air Jamaica	☎ 800-523-5585 (in North America); 876-922-3460 (on Jamaica); 44-020-8570-9171 (in the UK); 453-6611, fax 459-0592 (on St. Lucia); www.airjamaica.com
Air Martinique	☎ 452-2463; fax 453-6869
American Airlines/ American Eagle	☎ 800-433-7300 (in the US); 454-6777 (on St. Lucia); www.aa.com
Britannia (represented by St. Lucia Reps)	☎ 452-8232
British Airways	☎ 44-084-5773-3377 (in the UK); 452-3951 (on St. Lucia); www.british-airways.com
BWIA	☎ 888-853-8560 (in North America); 800-744-2942 (in the Caribbean); 452-3778 (on St. Lucia); www.bwee.com
British Caledonian (represented by Solar Tours and Travel)	☎ 452-5898
Helenair	☎ 452-7196/1958; fax 451-7360; e-mail helenair@candw.lc
LIAT	☎ 800-468-0482 (in North America); 452-2348/3051 (on St Lucia); fax 453-6583; 268-480-5601 (on Antigua, headquarters)
Virgin Atlantic (represented by Spice Travel)	☎ 452-0866

TIP

Approximate flying time to St. Lucia is 3½ hours from Miami, four hours from New York, five hours from Toronto, and eight hours from London.

Helicopter Services

The following companies provide helicopter transfers between St. Lucia's airports:

Eastern Caribbean Helicopters, ☎ 453-6952

St. Lucia Helicopters, ☎ 452-6950 (see *Sightseeing Tour Companies*, page 203) for more information.)

TIP

The departure tax, which is charged at both airports, is EC$54. Save time by having the correct amount in EC$ when you check in for your flight home.

Arrival By Sea

Ferry Service

L'Express des Iles operates catamaran ferry service between Castries and Fort-de-France, Martinique. The trip takes about 1½ hours and costs approximately US$40 (EC$104). From Martinique, you can continue to Dominica, Guadeloupe, Marie-Galante, and Les Saintes. Cars can make the journey on the "Jade Express," which carries vehicles and up to 400

passengers. Contact L'Express des Iles for additional information and schedules, ☎ 452-2211 (on St. Lucia) 0596-63-1211 (on Martinique); Internet: www.express-des-iles.com

The **Windward Lines** operate a weekly trip between St. Lucia and Barbados, St. Vincent, Trinidad, and Venezuela. The cargo/passenger ship arrives at Castries each Saturday morning and departs again the next day. For information on scheduling and services, contact the main office on Trinidad, ☎ 809-458-3348; fax 809-457-3577.

Cruise Ships

A modern duty-free shopping complex is on the north side of Castries Bay, and on busy days it is overrun with tourists.

Several major cruise lines dock at Pointe Seraphine in Castries. Passengers will find a tourist office, bank, restaurants, and a few dozen excellent duty-free shops right at the harbor. Taxis and guides wait just outside the gates with offers to take visitors into town or on a day-long tour of the major attractions.

TIP

Make sure you know if prices are quoted in US or Eastern Caribbean currency.

Be sure to agree in advance on the fee and exact itinerary of all tours. Most guides are professional, friendly, and knowledgeable, but a few tourists have reported unexpected fees for picture stops and long drives down uninteresting roads.

Private Boats

Visitors who arrive in private boats can dock at Rodney Bay, Castries, Marigot Bay and Vieux Fort.

Saint Lucia has made great improvements at all the marinas, and major charter centers are located at Rodney Bay and Marigot Bay. At Marigot Bay, you must anchor in the harbor and dinghy to the Customs office. Boats may also anchor off Reduit Beach, Pigeon Point, Anse Chastanet, Anse Cochon and Soufrière Bay.

Rodney Bay Marina, ☎ 452-0324; fax 452-0184; e-mail rbmarina@candw.lc
Castries Yacht Center, ☎ 452-6334/5348; 453-2653
The Moorings (Marigot Marina), ☎ 451-4357; fax 451-4230
Soufrière Marine Management, ☎ 459-7200/5500; fax 459-7799; e-mail smma@candw.lc.

Getting Around

Car & Motorcycle Rentals

Driving is on the left in Saint Lucia. It's worth paying extra for automatic transmission, because shifting with your left hand on unfamiliar roads can be difficult. You must be at least 25 years old, hold a valid license from your state, and purchase a local license for about US$11 in order to rent a car.

Roads are fairly well maintained, if you judge by Caribbean standards. However, most are narrow, and you'll come across hairpin bends in the mountains and kidney-pounding ruts along the coast and in the forest. All the secondary roads are challenging, and even the nicest resorts and out-of-the-way restaurants are often reached by unpaved lanes.

The immigration offices at both airports and all major car rental agencies issue local driving permits.

TIP

If you plan to explore isolated areas, consider renting a four-wheel-drive vehicle.

The area code for Saint Lucia is 758.

CAR RENTAL COMPANIES	
North American Companies	
Avis	☎ 800-331-1084, local 452-2202; fax 453-1536; e-mail avisslu@candw.lc
Budget	☎ 800-472-3325, local 452-0233; fax 452-9362; www.budgetstlucia.com
Hertz	☎ 800-654-3001, local 452-0679; fax 452-8980; e-mail hertzr@candw.lc
National	☎ 800-227-7368,local 450-8721; fax 450-8577; e-mail: carental@candw.lc
Local Companies	
Cool Breeze Jeep Rental	☎ 459-7729 (Soufrière); fax 459-5309
Courtesy	☎ 452-8140 (Gros Islet); fax 452-9566; e-mail courtesycar@candw.lc
Drive a Matic Car Rental	☎ 452-0544; fax 452-0630; e-mail jtb.ltd@candw.lc
Gibbin Rent a Car	☎ 452-9528; fax 452-0291; e-mail giboyaultd@yahoo.com
Guy's Cars	☎ 451-7147 (Castries)
C.T.L.	☎ 452-0732; fax 452-0401 (Rodney Bay Marina); e-mail ctlslu@candw.lc

You can rent a motorcycle from **Wayne's Motorcycle Centre**, ☎ 452-0680, and **Rodeo Rentals**, ☎ 452-0198.

Buses

There is no scheduled bus service on Saint Lucia. Private minivans provide inexpensive public transportation. However, they are usually crowded with locals playing loud music, their routes don't cover all the island, and schedules can be erratic. If you want to give it a try, stands are located on Darling and Jeremy Streets near the public market in Castries. All vans are marked with their route number and destination point. Outside the city, you can flag down a van along the main roads. These minivans cover the main routes between the capital of Castries and Gros Islets (route 1A), Soufrière (route 3D), and Vieux Fort (route 2H).

Most service to the south stops late in the afternoon. Buses run more frequently and later in the north, and on Friday nights they usually transport partygoers to and from Gros Islet until 10 or 11 o'clock.

Islanders are obliging about helping you find a van going the right direction and telling you when you get to your destination.

The typical fare from Castries to Gros Islet is EC$2/US 75¢ and from Castries to Vieux Fort around EC$6/US$2.20. Pay the drivers directly, and try to have correct change.

Taxis

Private taxis wait outside the airport, cruise ship terminal and major hotels. They don't have meters, so negotiate a fee before you get into the cab. Most drivers belong to a reputable cooperative that regulates fares and, with few exceptions, all are knowledgeable and polite. Expect to pay about EC$12 to go from Charles Airport to Castries and EC$120 to go from Hewanorra Airport to Castries, a 40-mile, one-hour trip.

TAXI COMPANIES	
The following companies are members of the Hotel and Tourism Association:	
Courtesy Taxi Co-op	☎ 452-1733; e-mail courtesy@candw.lc
Gros Islet Taxi Association	☎ 452-0913
Holiday Taxi	☎ 452-3081; fax 452-6093
N. Line Taxi Association	☎ 452-8563
Southern Taxi	☎ 454-6136; 454-9814
George Charles Airport Taxi	☎ 452-1599

TIP

Consider asking your concierge to call a cab for you so there will be no misunderstanding about the fare, pick-up point or destination.

Water Taxis

Water taxis transport passengers to and from various spots around the island. For a reasonable fare (approximately EC$2 for short rides to EC$10 for longer trips) you can shuttle between beaches, shops, restaurants and hotels around Rodney Bay, Pigeon Island, Marigot Bay and Soufrière. Look for the boats near the marina docks or ask for information at one of the businesses flanking the water. Some of the restaurants, such as Doolittle's at Marigot Bay, will refund your taxi fare if you present your tickets when you come in for a meal.

Rodney Bay Ferry, ☎ 452-0087; fax 452-8816.

Soufrière Water Taxi Association, ☎ 459-7239/5500; fax 458-7999; e-mail richie@candw.lc.

Festivals, Events & Holidays

Like all islands in the Caribbean, Saint Lucia fills its calendar with a multitude of festive events. Visitors can count on being around for some type of exposition or celebration. Party animals will enjoy the annual Carnival and weekly jump-ups (street dances). For music lovers, the best event is the Jazz Festival, a four-day extravaganza in May.

Major Annual Events

Carnival

Carnival tops the island's cultural activities. Colorful costumes, dance contests, music concerts and parades highlight the activities. In 1999, Saint Lucian officials decided to move Carnival from its traditional date, just before Ash Wednesday, to July, so that it wouldn't conflict with Trinidad's popular Carnival. It is an experiment that caught on and will continue. Contact the tourist bureau for the exact dates if you want to either attend or avoid it.

Carnival is the ultimate bash. Most official activities take place around Castries, but warm-up parties and concerts are held all over the island. Various camps are set up for the production of costumes for the many shows and street parades, and calypso tents go into action. Each tent has a team of dancers who organize a series of shows leading up to the main calypso competition. It introduces the public to current songs, and

the audience is encouraged to participate by showing their approval or rejection of the performance.

Jazz Festival

Saint Lucia's Jazz Festival in May is similar to Jamaica's Sunsplash, except the music is jazz instead of reggae. Renowned musicians from all over the world perform during this internationally-recognized event. Large outdoor concerts take place on picturesque Pigeon Island, where performers are showcased on a sand stage with historic buildings and the ocean in the background. Smaller shows are held at clubs and on open-air stages throughout the island. In addition to famous stars playing jazz at scheduled times, you may hear zouk, steel drums, salsa and reggae performed by local and international bands at informal public shows throughout the festival. For more details call the tourist office (☎ 800-456-3984) or check the Internet at www.stluciajazz.com. Tickets are available at the **Jazz Shop** at Pointe Seraphine, ☎ 451-8566; fax 452-5472. Evening performances are priced at US$35/EC$95.

Country Music Festival

The outdoor Country Music Festival has been a popular annual event since the kickoff concert in 1998. Nashville's toe-tapping tunes sound perfectly at home in the Caribbean during the three-day festival held on Pigeon Island each December. For this year's schedule, contact the **St. Lucia Tourist Board**, ☎ 800-456-3984; fax 212-867-2795.

Jounen Kwéyòl or Créole Day

On the Sunday closest to National Créole Day (October 28), five selected rural communities host a gala featuring island food, crafts, music and cultural displays. It's a great day of partying and fun, but the traffic is horrendous. Everyone tries to hop from village to village to visit their friends and participate in all the activities, so the roads become hopelessly gridlocked. You may have a better time if you can be on the island the first Sunday in October when groups from each community give a sample review of their shows in Pigeon Point Park. It's not as much fun as the real thing, but you'll enjoy the entertainment and get a chance to try local foods and drinks. For additional information, contact the **Folk Research Center**, ☎ 452-2279; fax 451-9365.

National Day & St. Lucy Day

December 13th is National Day as well as Saint Lucy Day. For many years, the islanders referred to this date as Discovery Day in the belief that Christopher Columbus landed on their island December 13th, 1502. However, logs show that Columbus was nowhere near the area on that date, and details about the actual *discovery* by anyone other than native Indians are vague. But a celebration is still appropriate, and the patron saint is celebrated in style. Lantern-lighted processions, traditional music, cultural activities, sporting events and a bounteous feast of local food is dedicated to Saint Lucy and the nation. You can get details about this year's scheduled events by contacting **Castries City Council**, ☎ 452-2611, ext 7071, or the **Tourist Office**, ☎ 800-456-3984.

Holy Week

Holy Week is observed solemnly and reverently with established Catholic traditions. On Good Friday, islanders go to church services and avoid pleasurable things. The foods that are eaten on this holy day include *akwa*, fish cakes, and *pain d'espices*, a thin biscuit. When Easter arrives, there are more church services and everyone exchanges gifts and enjoys large meals with friends and family.

TIP

If you want to be on Saint Lucia for one of the big annual events, contact the tourist board in the States, ☎ 800-456-3984; e-mail slutour@candw.lc, or check the Internet at www.st-lucia.com.lc. On St. Lucia, contact the Tourist Office in Castries, ☎ 452-4094.

Public Holidays

Banks and most businesses close on these days:

New Year's Day	January 1
New Year's Holiday	January 2
Independence Day	February 22
Labor Day	May 1
Emancipation Day	August 3
Thanksgiving Day	October 5
National Day	December 13
Christmas Day	December 25
Boxing Day	December 26

Variable religious holidays observed by public closings include:

Good Friday . . . . . Late March or early April
Easter . . . . . Late March or early April
Whit Monday . . . . . Eighth Monday after Easter
Corpus Christi . . . . . Ninth Thursday after Easter

Public holidays may fall on different dates from year to year. Contact the Tourist Board for current information.

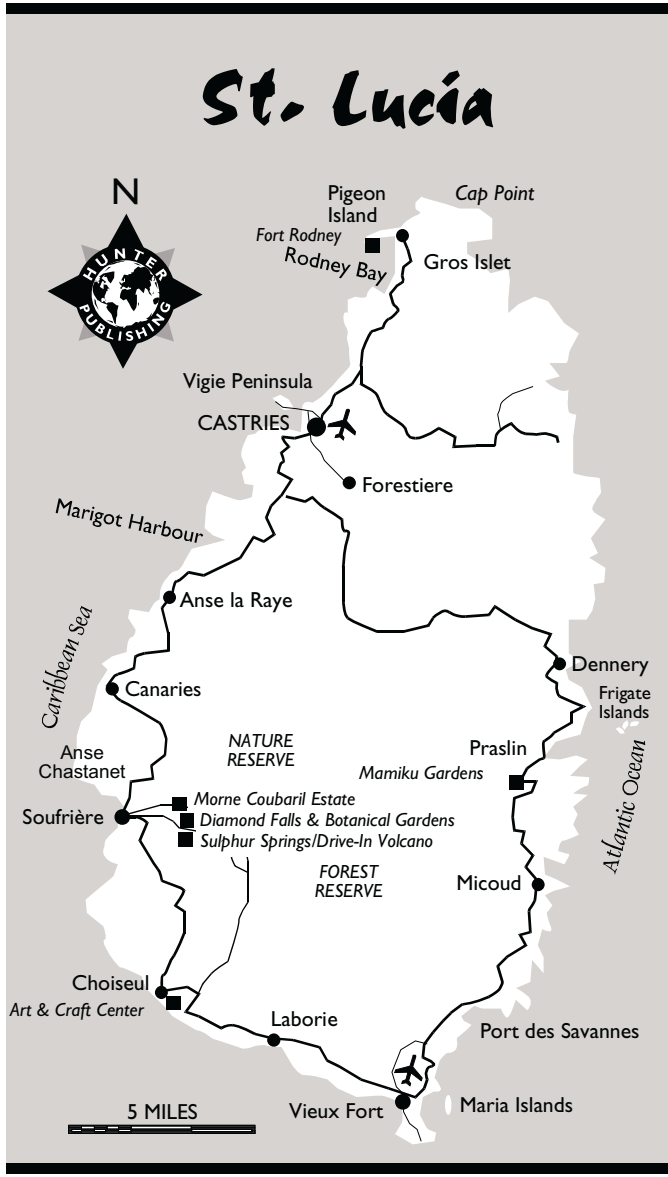
Exploring the Island

Several spots on Saint Lucia must be seen from the water to capture their true magnificence. Consider renting a small boat and touring along the coast, or sign up for a guided group cruise. Most large hotels and resorts arrange full-day and half-day boating excursions, or you can contact one of the companies listed on page 561. Another possibility is to ask at the tourism office about fishermen who are willing to take paying passengers out on their boats. Their rates are negotiable and reasonable, and their impromptu stories often are more entertaining than those of professional guides.

Whether you're on your own or in a group, be sure your water tour includes **Marigot Bay**, one of the most beautiful coves in the Caribbean. This pristine blue-green lagoon lies at the end of a long, narrow inlet that cuts into the hilly coast south of Castries. It's completely sheltered and features a palm-shaded white-sand beach. From land it is stunningly gorgeous but, from the water, it is even more sensational.

A number of marine sites around the island are designated as protected underwater reserves. Boating, fishing and unguided diving are not allowed within these areas.

Many day-trip boats make a stop at **Anse Cochon**, three miles south of Marigot, on the opposite side of the rocky headland at **Anse La Raye**. It's popular with divers and snorkelers because colorful corals and fish are found around the boulders just offshore and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Anse la Raye
Caribbean Sea
Canaries
Dennery
Frigate Islands
NATURE RESERVE
Anse Chastanet
Praslin
Mamiku Gardens
Morne Coubaril Estate
Soufrière
Diamond Falls & Botanical Gardens
Sulphur Springs/Drive-In Volcano
Atlantic Ocean
FOREST RESERVE
Micoud
Choiseul
Art & Craft Center
Laborie
Port des Savannes
5 MILES
Vieux Fort
Maria Islands

on the underwater ship (deliberately sunk) in the middle of the bay. You probably will have the beach all to yourself, because it can't be reached by car. This area is part of the protected marine reserve, so you must be with a guide to dive.

At the southern end of the island, **Soufrière, Anse Chastanet**, and the twin **Pitons** are in the Marine Management Area, so you must know the regulations or be with someone who does, if you intend to boat, dive, or fish here. Unless you're an experienced yachtsman, consider joining a group or hiring a guide to take you out to view this part of the island from the water. Looking back at the Pitons is especially awesome.

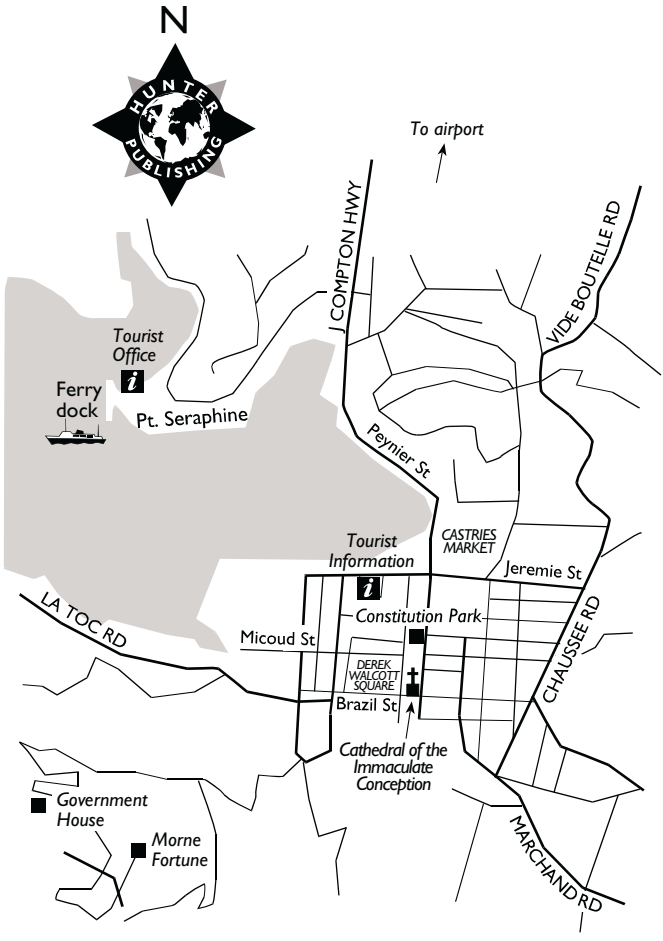
Castries

Be forewarned that the capital is not a beautiful city. Fires have destroyed most historical buildings, so your first impression will be that Castries is a concrete commercial center without character. However, the setting between rolling green hills and a turquoise sea is lovely, and residents radiate an infectious exuberance that puts visitors into an adventurous vacation mood.

Morne Fortuné

Start with a trip to the top of 835-foot Morne Fortuné, south of the city, for a panoramic view of all the action. This hill was coveted by French and English troops during the 18th and 19th centuries because of its high vantage point over the coast. **Fort Charlotte** was started at the summit by the French and expanded by the British over years of back-and-forth rule by both countries. Today, surviving buildings have been reno-

Castries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LA TOC RD
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Constitution Park
DEREK WALCOTT SQUARE
Brazil St
CHAUSSEE RD
Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
Government House
Morne Fortune
MARCHAND RD

vated to serve as a community college, and you can walk around the grounds. Go to the back of the college, where you'll find some old cannons, for a good view north to Pigeon Point and south to the Pitons. On a clear day, Martinique is visible far to the north. From here, it's easy to understand why the *morne* was so heavily fought over. On the way down the hill, stop across the street from the Victorian-style **Government House** for a good view of Castries and the natural harbor.

In Town

Back in the city, seek out **Derek Walcott Square** on Brazil Street, south of the bay. The park is named for one of Saint Lucia's two Nobel Prize winners. Derek Walcott won the award for literature in 1992, and Sir W. Arthur Lewis won the prize for Economics in 1979. Castries' oldest French-style wooden buildings surround the green park, and a 400-year-old tree sits on the eastern side.

Across the street from the tree, you'll see the stone **Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception**, built between 1895 and 1899. Go inside the church to see Biblical scenes painted by internationally renowned Saint Lucian artist Dunstan Saint-Omer. (Notice his trademark black Christ.) Fresh flowers sit on side altars and candles emit a soft light. If you attend mass on Sunday, you will be in the company of parishioners decked out in their multicolored best.

A Family of Artists

Saint-Omer and his sons also painted the mural depicting scenes of island life on Manoel Street, near the Banana Growers Association building. Alwyn, the eldest son, now manages the Saint-Omer Ad Agency and Art Gallery in Castries, and his delightful, brilliantly colored paintings are featured on the map handed out by the tourist office.

Another colorful sight is the **Castries Market** and **Vendors' Arcade** on Jeremie and Peynier streets. A bright orange-red roof covers one area, but stalls spill out of the buildings and spread along both sides of the road. You can't help getting caught up in the vibrant excitement as countless merchants invite you to sample their wares. This is the place to pick up picnic supplies, T-shirts, straw baskets and local crafts. If you're looking for duty-free goods, head to **Pointe Seraphine**, a small Spanish-style shopping mall on the north side of the harbor. Here, about 20 upscale businesses are laid out around the pleasant courtyard, including a tourist information office and car rental agency. You can take a ferry from the dock near the Castries Market or drive over on the John Compton Highway.

The following tours emphasize don't-miss places, and the best of the best are marked with a star (☆).

Northwestern Tour

From Castries to Pointe du Cap

HIGHLIGHTS: *The marina at* ***Rodney Bay****;* ***Gros Islet*** *(site of Friday night jump-ups);* ***Pigeon Point*** *and the* ***National Park****;* ***Point du Cap****.*

Take the well-maintained Gros Islet Highway north out of Castries, past the airport alongside two-mile-long Vigie Beach, to **Rodney Bay** (☆). This 80-acre protected lagoon opens to the sea through a man-made channel cut between Reduit Beach and the village of Gros Islet. The large, modern marina here is a popular stop for yachtsmen, and the bay itself is surrounded by restaurants, bars, watersports centers and shops.

Stroll around Rodney Bay & look at all the boats.

Gros Islet, on the north side of the harbor, is a charming little fishing village with a few narrow streets lined with brightly-painted wooden island-style houses. Not much goes on here – until Friday night. Then, you won't be able to get near the place. Streets are blocked off, rum shops expand onto the sidewalks, grills are set up on front lawns and street corners sizzle with enticing aromas, and soca blares from huge speakers on the main strip. Residents from all over the island join tourists for this weekly blow-out, known as **jump-up** (☆), which lasts long into Saturday morning. Do not miss this incredible transformation. It's a lot of fun even if you don't like to dance, hate current music trends, detest alcohol and never eat street-vendor food.

- Take a cab to and from jump-up, because parking and traffic is a nightmare.
- Dress casually and conservatively in cool clothing.
- Bring just enough Eastern Caribbean cash to see you through the evening, and leave all other valuables locked up at your hotel.
- Stick to the main streets, and be sensible about what you eat and drink.

Pigeon Island is no longer an island, and is now officially called Pigeon Point National Park. The tiny historic islet was connected to the main island by a

causeway back in the 1970s, but the 40-acre site at the tip of the man-made peninsula still is known as Pigeon Island. Drive out to explore the scattered remains of **Fort Rodney**. The one-time island has an interesting history, and fabulous views.

The History of Fort Rodney

Well before legitimate Europeans settled on Saint Lucia, corrupt Frenchman François le Clerc, nicknamed Jambe de Bois because of his wooden leg, hid out on Pigeon Island with the booty he collected from raids on Spanish ships. Two hundred years later, English troops, under the command of Admiral George Rodney, built fortresses on the small island so they could safely spy on French forces stationed on nearby Martinique. After England and France settled their multi-year battle for control of the eastern Caribbean, everyone lost interest in Pigeon Island, and the fort slowly disintegrated to ruins.

★ DID YOU KNOW?

Admiral Rodney is most often remembered for leading English troops stationed on Pigeon Island in a victory over French Admiral Comte de Grasse at the Battle of the Saintes in 1782.

Now that a causeway connects Pigeon to the main island, the Saint Lucia National Trust has restored some of the buildings and developed the entire area into an attractive park. Allow plenty of time to wander along the winding paths, explore the ruins that are scattered over 40 acres, linger on the two beaches

and visit the museum. You will have wonderful panoramic views from many places inside the park, but one of the most spectacular is the same one English troops had of Martinique from the well-preserved fort at the top of **Rodney Hill** (☆). From there, you can walk less than a mile up to Signal Peak for another sensational view back at Saint Lucia and across both the Atlantic and Caribbean waters.

Snacks and lunch are available at the Jambe de Bois Restaurant, ☎ 450-8166.

The national park is open daily 9 am-5 pm. The EC$10 entrance fee includes admission to the museum and interpretive center.

Back on the main highway, continue north of Pigeon Island to the elegant residential area known as **Cap Estate**. Look at the beautiful homes built among the picturesque rolling hills. Some of the island's most exclusive resorts are here (LeSPORT and Club Saint Lucia Resort) along with the Saint Lucia Golf and Country Club. In addition, the Derek Walcott Theatre and The Great House, an exquisite 18th-century colonial manor that is now a restaurant, are located on the grounds of the former Longueville Estate (see *Best Places to Eat*).

There's an infectious spirit in Soufrière that makes it irresistible.

Art lovers will want to stop at the studio and gallery of internationally-known artist, Llewelyn Xavier. It's housed in a white building on your left just past the second traffic circle, as you drive in from the south. The gallery also shows a selection of works by other Saint Lucian artists, including Derek Walcott (his Nobel Prize is for literature, but he is a man of many talents) and Roy Lawaetz.

The tourism office is on Maurice Mason Street, across from the boat docks, near the police station. ☎ 459-7419 or 454-7419.

When you've finished your tour of Cap Estate, you'll have to retrace your route back to Castries. There are no paved roads around the northern cape to the east coast.

The Southern Loop

HIGHLIGHTS: *Marigot Bay; the Pitons; Diamond Falls and Botanical Gardens; Sulphur Springs and the drive-in volcano crater; panoramic views from the southernmost tip of the island; Mamiku Gardens.*

The loop road from Castries through the southern section of the island passes through some of the most attractive scenery in the eastern Caribbean. Allow an entire day to explore this region, and expect to encounter narrow, bumpy roads along the way. Heading south out of the capital, you will wind up in forested mountains and dip into river valleys thick with banana trees.

Make your first stop **Marigot Bay** (☆), a gorgeous natural harbor and among the most outstanding anchorages in all the Caribbean. When you see the secluded cove, you will understand why pirates considered it an ideal hideout. Boats passing by in open water often miss the narrow opening that leads to the bay, which is tucked deep into the mountainous coast. A sandy, palm-shaded beach lies at the foot of the green hills, and a pontoon boat carries passengers from one side of the harbor to the other.

TIP

Consider returning late one afternoon for sunset happy hour at **Doolittle's** waterside restaurant and bar. Marigot Bay was the filming site of the 1967 movie *Doctor Doolittle*, starring Rex Harrison.

As you leave Marigot Bay heading south, you'll have wonderful views of the valley surrounding the Roseau

River. Just before the little fishing village of **Anse La Raye** you'll pass by large banana plantations with more spectacular views. If you have time, stop in town (or drive slowly along the narrow streets) to see the colorful wooden houses and observe the women washing clothes and bathing kids in the river. The residents will return your smiles and waves, and offer to help you find the road to Soufrière, because surely you are lost and do not intend to be in their ordinary little village. You'll find a similar scene at **Canaries**, nestled in a cove at the base of steep hills that offer superb vistas of the sea and countryside.

The Saint Lucia National Trust has recently established campsites and hiking trails at **Anse La Liberté**, where you will also find a pleasant beach. Continuing south, the road heads up into the fringes of the rain forest, then breaks out with breathtaking views of the Pitons as you drive to **Soufrière** (☆).

The second most important town on Saint Lucia is actually older and, in many ways, more interesting than the capital. Soufrière was founded by the French in 1746 and named for the sulphurous springs that flow in the collapsed volcanic crater located a couple of miles away. In its prime, the city was an important port that bustled with businesses engaged in the export of coffee and cocoa. When the market for these products dropped, Soufrière rapidly declined as well. Today, the village shows obvious signs of age and poverty, but improvements are being made, especially around the waterfront.

Try to visit on Saturday morning when the local **market** takes over the colorful site north side of the seafront. Residents display a large variety of produce and homemade items for sale. Another interesting area is **Elizabeth Square**, bordered by Sir Arthur Lewis Street (Lewis is one of two Saint Lucian Nobel Prize

winners) in the center of town, where you can peek into the old stone church. Take the time to wander along the narrow streets adjacent to the square to see the ancient weathered façades and gingerbread-trimmed wooden houses that have survived since the French governed the island. Chances are, you'll be enchanted by this sleepy fishing village that quite obviously marches to the beat of an out-of-date drummer.

Walk down a dirt road along the coast to a little undeveloped beach (**Malgre Tout)** and **waterfall** (☆) just south of town. Chances are you'll have the idyllic place to yourself, but you may run into boaters anchored at the south end of the beach. The waterfall is back from the sea in the direction of Petit Piton, and a sign points the way. It's on land owned by Jah I, and you must find him in his little wooden home to get the okay and pay about EC$3 to visit and bathe in the warm water.

Back in town, children and teens probably will offer to guide you to the nearby sulphur springs and botanical gardens. Hire the charmers if you wish, but it is entirely possible to find and visit these sites on your own.

Agreeing to a guided tour is a great way to donate to the local economy, and the kids are quite entertaining, if you're in the mood.

The **Diamond Botanical Gardens** are about a mile east of town on the **Soufrière Estate**. Follow the signs up Sir Arthur Lewis Street from Elizabeth Square to the site that encompasses the gardens, waterfall and mineral baths. A path leads through the shaded garden planted with flowering bird-of-paradise, hibiscus and ginger lily. At the end of the trail a waterfall pours from a fissure into a rocky pool. The water begins its passage 1,000 feet up and comes down the rock face in six stages through sulphur springs. Sulphur colors the water bright shades of

green, blue, and purple, and stains the rocks a deep, rusty orange.

The Soufrière Estate won a preservation award from American Express and is one of the historic plantations involved in the government-sponsored program called Nature Heritage Tourism.

> ★ **DID YOU KNOW?**
>
> King Louis XVI ordered the construction of baths over the springs in 1785 so that his troops could benefit from the curative powers of the waters.

The water comes from the ground at 106°F, and has a mineral content similar to the famous healing baths at Aix-les-Bains, France. Today, you can soak in the warm mineral baths that have been built among the ruins of the original French structures.

Diamond Botanical Gardens and the mineral baths at Diamond Falls are open daily 10 am-5 pm. ☎ 454-7565 in Soufrière; ☎ 452-4759 in Castries. The entrance fee is EC$7 for adults and EC$3.50 for children. There is an additional charge of EC$6.50 for use of the communal baths, and EC$10 for the private baths.

Nearby, off the road from Soufrière to Vieux Fort, the over-hyped **Sulphur Springs** at the drive-in volcano on **Mount Soufrière** are a must-see, simply because they're there.

The walls of the volcano disintegrated long ago, so don't expect to drive into an actual crater.

You park on the hillside, quite close to all the action, then walk among the dormant but bubbling gaseous pits that smell and look like a scene from hell. Guides will take you on a tour of the lunar-like landscape.

WARNING

Be sure to stay on designated paths and overlooks. The ground is soft, and you don't want to step off into the hissing, boiling mud.

Theoretically, guides are required and included in the EC$3 entrance fee. However, you will be approached by islanders who offer their individual services. While their services are not at all necessary, their stories and embellishments are entertaining. Sulphur Springs is open daily 9 am-5 pm.

TIP

Be sure to agree on a price before you consent to a guided tour. Even the official guides expect a tip.

When you leave the Springs, drive a short distance north on the Vieux Fort road to **Morne Coubaril Estate**, a magnificent plantation with fantastic views of the sea and the Pitons. You easily can spend the afternoon on the estate that is part of a 2,000-acre land grant given to the Deveaux family by French King Louis XIV in 1713. This 250-acre plantation was developed by one of the three original Deveaux brothers, and it remained in the family until 1960, when the last descendant sold it to Donald Monplaisir, who died in 1993. In 1995, Monplaisir's son opened the working estate to the public as a cultural and historical center. The 90-minute tour will give you a good idea of Saint Lucia's past. You will travel down the old mule path to ruins of the 18th-century sugar mill and a recreated village where slaves once lived. Morne Coubaril is open daily 9 am-5 pm. ☎ 459-7340.

The tour is included in the EC $15 entrance fee.

You will have a dazzling view of the **Pitons** as you drive south on the Soufrière-Vieux Fort road. These twin volcanic peaks soar straight out of the Caribbean. It's possible to hike **Gros Piton**, the shorter but wider mountain, but you must have permission from the Forest and Lands Department (☎ 450-2231 or 450-2078) and be accompanied by an authorized guide.

WARNING

This is a tough hike with steep ascents through thick vegetation, so only experienced hikers in good condition should consider it.

On your way to Vieux Fort, stop in the pleasant fishing village of **Choiseul** (named for a duke who served under King Louis XV) to visit the **Art & Craft Center**, ☎ 459-3226. Prices are good, and there's a large selection of traditional Caribbean handicrafts, including wood carvings, pottery, and baskets. Recently, tourists have reported unfriendly treatment by the sales staff, but there's no reason to stay away or assume you will encounter disagreeable people. Avoid the temptation to haggle about prices, and you shouldn't have any problems.

The next fishing village to the south, **Laborie**, is a giant step back to the past. Walk around the waterfront to see the colorful boats and chat with the friendly fishermen. Then, buy some fresh bread and drinks and hike (or drive) up **Morne Le Blanc** for a picnic. You'll have majestic views of Saint Vincent and the southern plains of Saint Lucia from the shaded rest area at the summit.

Vieux Fort, at the southern tip of the island, sits on a flat plain that extends out into the water where the clear-turquoise Caribbean meets the deep-blue Atlantic. It's a large port city and site of Hewanorra International Airport. Its charm lies in the fact that it is out of the line of most tourist traffic. You'll see some quaint wooden buildings in town and a fleet of fishing boats anchored in the bay, but the real attraction is the lighthouse view from **Moule-à-Chique** (☆). After a moderate hike to the top of the 730-foot hill, you'll be able to see the Maria Islands to the east, all of Saint Lucia's interior mountains to the north and, on a clear day, Saint Vincent 20 miles to the south.

Soon after you leave Vieux Fort, driving north up the east coast, you'll come to **Mankote Mangrove**, which serves as a source of nutrients for the fish nursery protected by a living reef in **Savannes Bay**. The shallow bay is an active fishing area and excellent breeding ground for conch and other sea creatures. From the observation tower you'll have great views of the bay and mangrove.

TIP

If you want to tour Mankote Mangrove or visit the nature reserves on the offshore Maria Islands or Frigate Islands, you must arrange a guided tour through the Saint Lucia National Trust, ☎ 452-5005.

The **Maria Islands** consist of two tiny islets called Maria Major and Maria Minor. Here, two rare species of reptile live in protected harmony with several other types of wildlife. This nature reserve is inhabited by the extremely scarce and harmless kouwes snake and the colorful zandoli te lizard (or Maria Island ground

lizard). The two islands also provide safety for seabirds, and people aren't allowed to visit during the nesting season from May 15 to July 31. At other times, you can go by boat with an approved guide and spend the day in the forest, swimming from the beach and exploring the underwater coral reefs.

Another nature reserve is located on the **Frigate Islands**. These two rocky chunks of land are named Frigate Major and Frigate Minor for the thieving, fork-tailed magnificient frigate birds that live there. Again, you must go by boat with an approved guide, and visiting is prohibited during the early summer nesting season. At other times you can picnic, swim, watch for indigenous rare birds and explore the rocky terrain. Boa constrictors and fer-de-lance snakes live in the tall grass on the islands, but they are rarely seen.

See "Hiking" for information on the Praslin Protected Landscape Trail. This trail provides views of frigate birds flying over the outer islands.

The Frigate Islands are off the east-coast fishing village of **Praslin**, which is between the main towns of Micoud and Dennery. The road is good, but unexceptional for the most part. However, make time to tour the windward side of the island to see the beautiful countryside carpeted by banana plantations and stop for views of the stunning Atlantic coast.

South of Praslin, you'll see signs for **Mamiku Gardens**, an 18th-century estate that has been restored and is open to visitors. You can walk along flagstone paths through 12 acres of wild woodlands to manicured areas with names such as Secret Garden and Mystic Garden. There are benches made of tree branches where you can sit and look out on fabulous views of the Atlantic and the Frigate Islands. The Shingleton-Smith family has owned the property since 1906, but the main estate house was built in 1796 by Baron de Micoud, a French aristocrat and for-

mer governor of Saint Lucia. Brigand's Bar and Garden Gate gift shop now occupy the renovated house.

Mamiku Gardens are open daily, 9 am-5 pm. ☎ 455-3729.

In the handsome town of **Dennery** you can watch fishermen arriving in their colorful, creatively-named boats. If you have time, follow the road at the south end of town inland along the Dennery River until you run out of pavement. This detour offers some interesting scenery. Driving back through town to the cross-island highway that cuts through the interior will bring you back to Castries and the west-coast resorts.

See "Hiking" for information on the one-mile trail at Barre de l'Isle and climbing to the top of Mount La Combe.

Continuing, you'll ascend to Grande Rivière then climb steeply over the **Barre de l'Isle**, a ridge that divides the island, where you'll have good views of the forest and Roseau Valley. As you approach L'Abbayée, you can branch off toward Sarot for some splendid views as you veer right and drive over the ridge going toward La Croix and the Cul-de-Sac River valley. Alternately, continue directly through Bexon, veer left at Deglos, then on into Castries.

Some of the most popular day trips are hikes through the rain forest and boat rides to the famous Pitons on the less-populated southern end of the island.

Organized Tours

If you want to see the island with someone who knows it well, consider taking a half-day or full-day tour with an enthusiastic and informative guide. Saint Lucia's strict conservation policies prohibit unaccompanied exploration of some sites, but a trained guide can get you into almost any area. Half-day tours run about US$35-40 per person, while full-day excursions range from US$70-100 per person and usually include lunch.

SIGHTSEEIING TOUR COMPANIES	
Courtesy Taxi and Touring	☎ 459-0302; fax 453-7175; e-mail courtesy@candw.lc; www.stluciatravel.com.lc/courtesy.htm
Island Bike Hikes	☎ 458-0908 (phone/fax); e-mail: mtnbikeslu@candw.lc; www.cyclestlucia.com
Paradise Helicopter Tours	☎ 450-9203; fax 450-9205;e-mail information@paradisehelicopters.com; www.paradisehelicopters.com
Pegasus Tours	☎ 458-3049; fax 458-3048; e-mail: pegasusmarigotbay@yahoo.com
Sunlink Tours	☎ 452-8232; fax 452-0459; e-mail tours@stluciareps.com; www.stluciareps.com
St. Lucia Helicopters	☎ 453-6950; fax 452-1553; e-mail stluciahelicopters@candw.lc; www.stluciahelicopters.com

The area code for Saint Lucia is 758.

Sunup to Sundown

Since many visitors opt for all-inclusive vacations on Saint Lucia, days often include programed activities, group tours to the island's main attractions and lots of time on the resort beach. Not a bad way to spend a few days.

Still, a time may come when you want to strike out on your own for a bit of freelance adventure, and you'll find the island has natural and historical features that make it one of the most superb destinations in the Caribbean.

Saint Lucia's signature twin Piton peaks reign over 19,000 protected acres of wild green mountains, thick rain forest, medicinal hot springs and coral reefs. Miles of trails offer hikers unlimited opportunities to discover exotic flowers and rare wildlife as they

explore the diverse countryside. Those who prefer water to land will enjoy snorkeling or diving in the warm, clear Caribbean Sea, where incredible natural treasures remain undisturbed.

All beaches on St. Lucia are public.

Along the coast, long stretches of soft sand offer swimmers and sunbathers a virtual paradise. Natural harbors and protected bays provide ideal anchorages for yachts, and an abundance of fish lure anglers out to the deep sea. Several tour operators run popular around-the-island excursions stopping at sites that cannot be reached by land.

Saint Lucia, Naturally

The Saint Lucia Tourist Board recently launched an innovative program aimed at protecting the island's natural and historical assets while promoting diversified tourism. What that means to visitors is more developed attractions, especially in rural areas, and increased regulation of activities that impact the environment. The intention is to generate more tourism without disturbing nature, which will result in additional money flowing from tourists to local businesses and residents. This in turn will guarantee a beautiful and desirable vacation destination for future tourists.

Expect entrance fees (usually small) at almost all attractions, and mandatory guides in protected areas, including the underwater reserves. In addition, anticipate more small inns and environmentally friendly luxury resorts throughout the island, especially in the underdeveloped south and along the east coast. The Department of Forestry and Lands is working with the National Trust to create more nature trails and develop full-facility campgrounds. Al-

ready, tourists are noticing increased vigilance among local authorities toward protecting and managing attractions in their communities.

Saint Lucians are becoming more educated about their delicate environment and what it means to their livelihoods. They want you to visit and enjoy their island, but they expect you to respect it and contribute to its preservation.

Beaches

Saint Lucia's best beaches are along the western coast, where warm Caribbean waters and soft sand provide perfect conditions for swimming and sunning. On the northern end, around Castries and the big resorts, you'll find white or golden sand. To the south, where there are numerous isolated coves at the foot of steep mountains, you find black volcanic sand. The rugged Atlantic coast has marvelous isolated beaches with heavy surf that makes them too dangerous for swimming, but perfect for getting away from the main tourist areas. Nature lovers will want to arrange a boat tour to the small offshore islands that serve as habitats and nesting spots for indigenous wildlife.

Certified divers can explore the coral reefs off the southwest coast, and there are two sunken ships near Anse Cochon. Other popular sites include the waters around Pigeon Point and at the foot of the Pitons. Most resorts provide complimentary introductory dive instruction and snorkel equipment, and there are several well-equipped dive centers with PADI-certified instructors and guides.

Northern Beaches

Choc Bay is perhaps the best-known stretch of golden sand on the island. Located between Castries and Gros Islet, it has palm-shaded sand and calm waters, which make it particularly popular with families. **Vigie Beach** is at the southern end, about a mile north of Castries. While it's shady and clean, it is often shunned by tourists because it sits near the runway at George Charles Airport. Its only hotel is the Rendezvous Resort for couples only.

Sandals Halcyon Resort is around Vide Bouteille Point at the southern end of **Choc Beach**, and the Wyndham Morgan Bay Resort is just north, across the inlet to Choc River. East Winds Inn and Windjammer Landing Resort are at Labrellotte Point on the northern end of the bay. You can rent watersports equipment from the sports center at Windjammer and arrange diving excursions through Frogs, ☎ 452-0913, also at Windjammer.

Choc Bay covers a large area of shoreline, and all the resorts located on beaches there are separated by wide undeveloped spaces. Each hotel has its own signed entrance and drive off the main highway.

Reduit Beach faces the Caribbean and forms the eastern arm of sheltered Rodney Bay lagoon. It's a spectacular beach with soft, deep, beige sand and tranquil water that draws tourists from three ultra-chic resorts nearby (Rex St. Lucian, Rex Papillon, and Royal St. Lucian). You can get a drink at the resorts' waterside bars and rent equipment from their sports centers. The Rex St. Lucian offers parasailing, and the water there is ideal for anyone learning to windsurf. The entrance into Rodney Bay is cut through the north end of the beach, so you must walk or drive around the bay to reach Gros Islet.

The causeway out to **Pigeon Point** has a large sandy beach within walking distance of Gros Islet. There are no facilities here, but you'll likely have the place to yourself during the week – unless some resident farm animals decide to join you.

In the past, Pigeon Point has suffered from littering, but the tourist board has worked hard to make all users more conscientious.

Inside **Pigeon Island National Park** is a pleasant sand beach near the pier, as well as several rocky waterfront areas for relaxing and enjoying the views.

South of Castries, **La Toc Bay** is the crescent-shaped home of Sandals St. Lucia Resort. The beach is lovely, but strong currents sometimes make swimming a chore. You'll find more placid spots farther south.

Almost every little town has some type of beach, but they are used mostly by locals and you may feel out of place.

Tourists feel right at home at **Marigot Bay**, which is simply too stunning for words. It's secluded, surrounded by tall green hills and shaded by palm trees. While it's a popular anchorage for yachts, the cove is partially divided by a coral bar and large enough to accommodate deserted beaches and well-camouflaged facilities. A little water taxi provides rides from one side of the bay to the other, and you can get drinks and lunch at one of the restaurants or bars.

Anse La Raye is a shady beach that is popular with village residents. If you want to try it, bring a picnic and a snorkeling equipment. There are no facilities, but the water is clear and ideal for snorkeling. **Anse Couchon's** magnificent black-sand beach can be reached only by boat. Ask around in Anse La Raye for the name of a fisherman who will take you there for a reasonable fee. (Be sure he also will come back for you at a specific time.)

TIP

Rosemond's Trench Divers at Marigot Bay offers snorkeling and diving trips to Anse Couchon, ☎ 451-4761. Again, bring your snorkeling equipment so you can observe the colorful fish in the crystal-clear water.

A short distance south of Couchon, park your car and walk down a steep hill to another black-sand beach at **Jambette Point**, just before the town of Canaries.

Southwestern Beaches

Anse Chastanet (pronounce this nasally as *ohns-shas-tin-ay*) isn't for everyone, and that's what makes it so incredibly fabulous for some. From its gritty black-sand beach you have a breathtaking view of the Pitons. A sudden steep drop-off close to shore leads to an underwater world that's protected as a marine reserve, so snorkeling and diving are excellent directly from the beach. Children and less confident swimmers may feel uncomfortable here, but anyone who enjoys the ocean and its remarkable creatures will be captivated. The Anse Chastanet Resort is located here, along with Scuba St. Lucia Dive Center. You can enjoy a meal, rent equipment and schedule a boat excursion right on the beach.

Tall palms & thatched huts provide shade at Anse Chastanet.

The road to Anse Chastanet is brutally rugged.

Around Grand Caille Point from Anse Chastanet, and reached by the same rutty road, you'll find little **Trou au Diable**. Snorkeling is especially good here. The black-sand beach in front of the Hummingbird Resort and the Still Plantation Resort also offers calm waters and good snorkeling with breathtaking views of the Pitons.

Both of these resorts have bars for beachcombers and good restaurants.

The crescent-shaped bay of **Anse des Pitons** is south of Soufrière in a dramatic setting between Petit Piton and Gros Piton. Glamourous Jalousie Hilton Resort and Spa is here. You can rent sports equipment or arrange scuba excursions through Frogs Dive Center. The Bang Restaurant and Bar is located nearby, offering inexpensive meals and drinks.

WARNING

The current is sometimes strong at Anse des Pitons, but snorkeling and diving are excellent below both the Pitons.

Windsurfers will find good conditions at **Anse de Sables** in the eastern curve of the peninsula near Vieux Fort on the south end of the island. If you don't mind the sound of jet engines, consider **Honeymoon Beach** on the west side of Hewanorra Airport.

Northeastern Beaches

Unless you have a four-wheel-drive vehicle and a terrific map, you can't drive to the beautiful beaches along the isolated northeastern coast. However, you can hike there. **Cas-en-Bas** is only a 45-minute hike from Gros Islet. When you get there, you'll find excellent windsurfing conditions and a bar. Other untamed windy beaches are within walking distance, both to the north and south.

Another option for seeing this area is to drive the interior road south of Gros Islet to Mochy, then follow the river east to **Dauphin Beach**. From there you can continue north all the way to **Anse Lavoutte** or go south to **Marquis Bay** and **Grande Anse**. Roads are

being improved on this remote part of the island, but check with the tourist bureau or your hotel for current conditions.

Diving & Snorkeling

Veteran divers say Saint Lucia's underwater world equals or surpasses other Caribbean sites, and new environmental regulations insure that the pristine coral reefs and abundant sea life remain as undisturbed as possible.

Soaring mountains that captivate visitors on land continue below the sea and provide shelter for a tremendous variety of creatures and plants. One of the most popular dives in the West Indies is off the beach at **Anse Chastanet**, which is part of the Soufrière Marine Management Area, where an underwater plateau starts near shore. This shallow dive, from five to 25 feet deep, is great for novice divers and snorkelers, offering brightly colored sponges, soft corals, large brain corals, goatfish, parrotfish, chromis and wrasse. Frogfish live in a cave at the base of the reef.

Night divers have reported sighting The Thing, a Loch Ness sort of monster that is said to vacation at Anse Chastanet.

As you dive deeper, the reef drops quickly from 20 to 140 feet in a solid wall of mixed corals surrounded by schools of fish, crabs, lobsters and eels. At around 100 feet, layers of porcelain-like plate coral are stacked one on top of another. The massive coral reef continues all the way to the bay at Soufrière in water that habitually offers 80 to 100 feet of visibility.

Marine photographers often capture shots of **Fairy Land**, a current-cleaned coral plateau off the Anse Chastanet Point.

Other favorite areas include waters below **Petit Piton**, where there are incredible clusters of sponge and coral. This is the location of Superman's Flight, a

wall that drops gently to 1,600 feet and was featured in a scene from the movie *Superman II*. Nearby, around the base of **Gros Piton**, five-finger coral grows solidly from a depth of 15 feet to 50 feet.

An excellent drift dive is along the wall off **Anse La Raye**, and wreck divers enjoy exploring *Lesleen M*, a 165-foot freighter that was deliberately sunk south of Marigot Bay. Perhaps the most talked about area is the **Key Hole Pinnacles**, which were voted one of the Ten Best Dive Sites by *Caribbean Travel and Life*. It's a remarkable site where four volcanic peaks rise sharply from the ocean floor to within a few feet of the surface.

Dive Centers

Anyone with a mask, tube and fins can snorkel in the waters off the western coast, but you must be a certified diver accompanied by an authorized dive guide to scuba in Saint Lucian waters. Resort courses and full-certification courses are offered for beginners by many dive operators.

The following dive centers offer excellent trips with knowledgeable, licensed instructors and guides. Expect to pay US$45-55 for a single dive, including equipment and entrance fee into the marine reserve (EC$8). Introductory resort courses are about US$70, and open-water certification courses run US$400.

TIP

Two-tank dives and multi-dive packages work out to much less per dive, but prices depend on who you dive with and what is included. Serious divers will want to check into complete dive vacations offered by many of the large resorts.

Ask about having a video made of your dive. It's the best souvenir you can bring home.

See "Best Places to Stay" for resort contact information.

SCUBA St. Lucia, located at Anse Chastanet just north of the Pitons, is the island's oldest and most internationally-recognized dive facility. It's an SSI Platinum Pro, PADI Dive Center and DAN (Divers Alert Network) Instructor training facility. The friendly staff of 20 multilingual divers is headed up by top-notch managers Michael, Karyn and Gordon. They go out daily on three large custom-designed deep V-Hull boats to the most outstanding sites around Saint Lucia, and offer shore dives in the marine reserve located directly in front of the center. Courses are available at all levels, and they feature night dives, photography dives and wreck dives. ☎ 459-7000; fax 459-7700; e-mail scubastlucia@candw.lc; www.scubastlucia.com.

Frog's Diving has centers at Windjammer Landing Beach Resort and The Still Plantation and Resort. They offer all levels of PADI instruction and dive excursions, including night dives. Their instructors and dive masters are relaxed professionals with an intense interest in preserving and showing off the underwater beauty found in the award-winning marine reserve between Petit and Gros Piton. Top-of-the-line Sherwood equipment is set up on modern motorboats, and divers are transported quickly to areas known for dramatic color and unusual wildlife. They are experienced in reef, cave, wall and drift diving all along the

west coast, and know where to find shy eels, turtles and seahorses. ☎ 450-8831 (phone/fax); e-mail info@frogsdiving.com; www.frogsdiving.com.

Dolphin Divers is actively exploring new sites off the north coast.

Dolphin Divers is located at Rodney Bay Marina and is popular with divers who enjoy a fast boat ride out to the best scuba sites. You can set your watch by the sound of their motors as they crank up each morning at 8:30 and head out to sea. PADI-certified instructors teach every type of course, including advanced and specialty ratings, and offer excursions to all types of sites, including wrecks and walls. They also fill tanks and meet up with divers arriving by private yacht. ☎ 452-9485; fax 452-0802; e-mail dolphin@candw.lc.

Buddies Scuba, in St. Lucia Yacht Services at Vigie Marina near Castries, is a small center that offers PADI open-water certification and two-tank dive trips to Anse Chastanet and Anse Cochon. They also provide camera rental, night dives and dive packages. ☎ 452-9086; e-mail buddies@candw.lc; www.superior.co.uk/buddies/index.htm. You get plenty of one-on-one attention here.

Mooring Scuba Center is a PADI dive shop at Club Mariner in Marigot Bay that runs a full training facility. They also take divers to many of the best sites around the island. ☎ 451-4357.

Rosemond's Trench Divers is also at Marigot Bay in the Beach Resort complex. Rosemond Clery, a Saint Lucian who is considered one of the most qualified divers in the Windwards, owns and operates the center. He has a staff of five who help him with PADI instruction for all levels. Rosemond is also an expert underwater photographer, and he is enthusiastic about showing experienced divers the most interesting and photographic areas off Soufrière and Anse Cochon. ☎ 451-4761; fax 453-7605.

Dive Fair Helen seems a strange name for a dive center until you remember that Saint Lucia is often called "the Helen of the West Indies" because of its natural splendor. The PADI-certified center, located at the Wyndham Morgan Bay Resort on Choc Bay, is owned and run by a Saint Lucian who is a dedicated environmentalist and marine researcher. The staff emphasizes marine preservation as they instruct certification courses and dives. ☎ 450-1640 or 451-7716; fax 451-9311; e-mail divefairhelen@candw.lc; www.divefairhelen.com.

Boating

Take at least one around-the-island boat tour. Better yet, charter a boat and take your time exploring. Some of the sites, such as the volcanic Piton mountains, simply cannot be fully appreciated from land. Others, such as the isolated bay at Anse Cochon, cannot be reached by land.

Several companies run excellent day sails down the calm west coast. Most stop for land tours at places such as Diamond Falls and the drive-in volcano, then anchor offshore for swimming and snorkeling. The price usually includes transportation from your hotel, drinks, snacks and entertainment. At the marinas in Marigot Bay and Rodney Bay, you can hire your own boat – any size and type, with or without a crew. You can even live aboard or travel to other nearby islands.

The Atlantic Rally for Cruisers

December is an exciting time for sailing enthusiasts to be on Saint Lucia. This is when the world's largest ocean-crossing sailing event, the Atlantic Rally for Cruisers, finishes in Rodney Bay. Approximately 150 boats compete in the race across the Atlantic from Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. For exact dates and other information, contact the Saint Lucia Tourist Board at ☎ 888-4-STLUCIA. Or visit the ARC website at www.worldcruising.com/arc.

Boat Rentals, Day Sails & Charters

The area code for Saint Lucia is 758.

Leisure
☎ 452-4484; fax 453-2885
e-mail degazonf@candw.lc.
A 50-foot luxury cruiser avilable for rent from Fred Degazon.

Oasis Marigot Ship 'n Shore Vacations
☎ 800-263-4202; fax 819-326-3816
e-mail info@oasismarigot.com
www.oasismarigot.com

Seabird Charters
☎ 452-8294; fax 450-1296

Cats, Inc
☎ 450 8651; fax 452-0659
e-mail catsltd@candw.lc
Catamaran rentals from Rodney Bay Marina.

Jem Marine Co. Ltd.
☎ 451-8290

Tropical Dream Charter
☎ 450-8522; fax 452-9780

Capt. Mike
☎ 450-1216; fax 450-1296
e-mail slhta@candw.lc

Trade Winds Yachts, Rodney Bay
☎ 452-8424; fax 452-8442
Offers bareboat or crewed charters, live-aboard sailing school, and one-way or round-trip voyages to Martinique or St Vincent.

Sunsail, Rodney Bay
☎ 452-8648; fax 452-0839
e-mail syachts@candw.lc
www.sunsail.com
In the US, ☎ 800-327-2276; fax 410-280-2406
Rents bareboat or crewed charters, and runs one-way cruises to the Grenadines.

Destination St. Lucia, Rodney Bay
☎ 452-8531; fax 452-0183
e-mail info@dsl-yachting.com
www.dsl-yachting.com
Run by an Austrian couple, Ulrich and Sandra Meixner, who have a fleet of 15 sailing yachts of different makes and sizes. Their staff is multilingual.

The Moorings, Marigot Bay
☎ 451-4357 or 451-4256; fax 451-4353
www.moorings.com
Has a bareboat rental fleet of Beneteaus ranging from 38 to 50 feet, and a crewed fleet of boats that are in 50- to 60-foot yachts. They also run the 45-room Marigot Bay Hotel.

Yacht Annie T
☎ 758-450-1411
e-mail: yachtannie.t@candw.lc
www.yachtanniet.com
This 51-foot Jeanneau Sun Odyssey sailing sloop is a luxury yacht available for bare boat or crewed charters from St. Lucia to neighboring islands.

Princess Zoe
☎ 970-926-6224; fax 970-926-6223
e-mail jay@vail.net
www.justgo.net/zoe.htm
Jay Tschirner rents this 50-foot Beneteau 505 for crewed or bare boat charters out of Marigot Bay.

Riposte
☎ 01243-641721 (phone/fax in the UK) or 758-484-3880 (on St. Lucia)
www.nbi.net/stlucia/riposte/charter.html
Skipper Tom Barrett captains this 47-foot sailing yacht on daily and week-long trips out of Rodney Bay.

Cool Tides
☎ 758-450-4001 or 484-9751 (cell); fax 450-4002
e-mail tgibbs@cooltides.com
www.cooltides.com
Captain Julian Adjohda can accommodate up to 12 passengers in six guest cabins for overnight cruises. Day sails are also available aboard The Fantasy, *a 120-foot schooner.*

Endless Summer
☎ 450-8651; fax 452-0659
e-mail info@endlesssummer.com
www.endlesssummer.com
Catamaran cruises, including a champagne sunset cruise.

Brig Unicorn, Vigie Marina
☎ 452-6811
e-mail richingsm@candw.lc
www.brigunicorn.com
Conducts tours on a 140-foot replica of a 19th-century schooner that was used in the filming of the movie Roots.

Douglas Sailing Tours
☎ 457-7777
Captain Douglas Rapier takes passengers on full-day sailing trips to Martinique, with whale-watching on the way.

***Vigie* Cruises**
☎ 452-9423; e-mail cruiseco@candw.lc
This 56-foot twin-engine cruiser departs from Rodney Bay Marina at 9 am heading toward Soufrière and returns around 5 pm. Stops for sightseeing tours, lunch at the Still Restaurant and snorkeling at Anse Cochon.

Fishing

Saint Lucia has outstanding sports fishing, and even novices often catch a whopper. Guides know the waters well and will take you to the optimum sites for sailfish, marlin, tuna, dorado, barracuda and wahoo. Expect to pay about US$750 for up to four people on a private full-day charter, and around US$350 for up to four people on a private half-day charter. You can join an organized group for about US$50 per half-day and US$100 per full-day.

Deep-Sea Charter Operators

***Mako* Water-Sports**, Rodney Bay Marina
☎ 452-0412; fax 452-0952
e-mail makowatersports@hotmail.com
www.stluciabusiness.com/mako.htm
Captain Ferdinand James will be your guide on Annie Baby*, a fully-equipped 31-foot boat with a 240HP diesel engine or on Mako, a 31-foot sportsfisherman built in Holland..*

Capt. Mike's Sportfishing Cruises, Vigie Marina
☎ 452-7044; fax 450-1296
www.worldwidefishing.com/stlucia/b350/index.html
Crewed 31- to 38-foot fully-equipped Bertrams.

Hackshaws Boat Charters and Sportfishing
☎ 758-453-0553
www.worldwidefishing.com/stlucia/b883/index.html
Fishing enthusiast Chris Hackshaw invites visitors aboard his fleet of boats for half- and full-day sportfishing or whale- and dolphin- watching trips.

Windsurfing

Most of the large resorts have complimentary windsurfing equipment for their guests, and rentals are available from their beachside sports centers. There's a windsurfing center called **Waves** at Choc Bay, ☎ 451-3000. Expect to pay about US$10 per hour for a basic rental and US$30 for lessons, which last two or three hours.

Waves also has waterskis for rent.

Try parasailing at the Rex Saint Lucian Resort on Reduit Beach.

Experienced windsurfers will like the isolated areas on the Atlantic coast, but conditions can be dangerous. **Cas-en-Bas** can be reached from Gros Islet, and you can get to other east-coast beaches from the village of **Mochy**. The beaches around **Vieux Fort** on the south coast are safer and easier to reach by car. You'll find good trade winds blowing at **Anse de Sables** and you can rent equipment from several outfitters located on the Atlantic-facing beach. Three to try:

Island Windsurfing, ☎ 758-454-7400

Sandy Beach Restaurant & Windsurfing Center, ☎ 758-454-7416

Tornado Surf Centre, ☎ 758-454-7579 (phone/fax); e-mail tornadosurf@gmx.de; www.tornado-surf.com

WARNING

No one is allowed to land on the uninhabited islets that lie about a half-mile offshore in the Maria Islands Nature Reserve. The area is protected by the St. Lucia National Trust to ensure the safety of indigenous lizards and snakes, and to protect the nesting grounds of turtles and migratory birds.

Hiking

Native guides who have explored Saint Lucia's thick forests and towering mountains since childhood designed the trails that cut through some of the island's most gorgeous countryside. As a result, hikers are guaranteed awesome sights and extraordinary experiences as they traverse isolated areas overseen by the Department of Forestry and Lands. This government department takes months to gather information so that each trail can be designed and developed to provide optimum hiking experiences with the least impact on the environment. Even inexperienced hikers can manage the gentle ups and downs of many of the paths. Overlooks and rest areas are spaced to encourage frequent stops, and some of the tracks have been divided into segments that allow easy access for short treks. Experienced hikers with plenty of energy can tackle steeper climbs and longer distances through more remote terrain.

If you want to hike on land protected by the National Trust, you must obtain permission from the Forestry Department at ☎ 450-2231, ext. 308, or the National Trust, ☎ 452-5005. If you hike with an organized group, the fee (EC$25) is usually included in rate.

You'll need a professional guide trained by the National Trust or forestry department to enter the reserves. This strictly enforced policy is meant to protect both the hiker and the environment, and the friendly, entertaining guides point out things that you'll miss if you try it on your own.

Groups can be too noisy for birdwatching, so if you want to spot a parrot, consider a private guide.

Arrange for hikes by contacting the National Trust, ☎ 452-5005. You can also join an organized group coordinated by various tour operators.

The Union Nature Reserve is adjacent to the nursery of the Union Agricultural and Research Station, where baby trees are nurtured. The **Department of Forest and Lands** also is headquartered here along with a small but fascinating **mini zoo**. Don't underestimate the zoo because of its size or outward appearance. Inside, you're guaranteed a sighting of boa constrictors, iguanas, parrots, agoutis and other elusive critters.

You can pick up permits and arrange for hiking tours into the rain forest and other reserves at the Department of Forest and Lands, ☎ 450-2231. The office is a bit tricky to find. Go past the Sandals Halcyon Resort, north of Castries, then turn inland on the road to Babonneau. You'll see the Union Agricultural Station on the right, about a mile from the main highway.

Two trails begin behind the zoo and forestry offices. The **Hillside Trail** loops through a mile of rough terrain and climbs to heights of 350 feet, so you'll need to be in good shape for this two-hour hike. The gentler **Garden Trail** is a pleasant half-mile walk along a

gravel path with stops at a medicinal herb patch. Both trails are self-guided, and a brochure gives information about plants and wildlife encountered along the way.

The Barre de l'Isle Trail is one of the best hikes through the rain forest. You can take an easy one-hour hike or rigorous three-hour climb along this *barre*, or ridge, that divides the eastern and western parts of the island. There are fantastic views along the way, and you have a fair chance of spotting a Saint Lucian parrot. If you're in good shape, go for the longer trek up **Mount La Combe**, which tops out at 1,446 feet and offers the best panoramic vistas.

A new trail called **Praslin Protected Landscape** is a three-mile nature trail on the southeast coast between Dennery and Micoud. It's a fairly easy, but long trail with dramatic views of the Atlantic. In addition to seeing a wide range of plants and wildlife, you'll gather facts on the island's history, since this rugged coastline was the home of Amerindian tribes.

The 2½-mile **Des Cartier Trail** begins six miles inland from Micoud on the east coast and crosses the **Quilesse Forest Reserve**. If you're quiet, you have a good chance of seeing a rare Jacquot parrot or Saint Lucian oriole flying among the treetops deep in the rain forest.

★ DID YOU KNOW?

Some of the Gommier trees grow to heights of more than 130 feet, and it's easy to understand how natives once carved boats from a single trunk.

Another rain forest hike begins seven miles inland from Soufrière on the west coast. In the **Edmund**

Forest Reserve, hikers have the best views of the Pitons and 3,117-foot Mount Gimie. You'll see incredibly beautiful wild orchids and bromeliads growing among the trees, and you'll probably get wet since it's one of the rainiest parts of the island.

Kouwes snakes, thought to be the rarest in the world, live on Maria Major.

Day trips are organized out to the **Maria Islands** off the southeast coast. An easy walking path leads to an observation point visited by geckos and a large ground lizard called the zandoli te. The islands are relatively untouched, offering 120 different species of plants and several types of rare wildlife. A wide range of birds and butterflies thrive on all the tiny islets.

The **Frigate Island Nature Trail** is actually located in a national park on the main island. A mile-long trail runs along cliffs above the Atlantic at Preslin Bay between the towns of Micoud and Dennery. It offers scenic views of the offshore islands.

TIP

Bring binoculars so you can get a good look at the magnificient frigate birds circling above.

The forestry department has laid out trails in most areas on Saint Lucia, and you can ask about hikes to the summits of **Gros Piton** (Petit Piton is off-limits because of erosion) and **Piton Flore**. Guides are also available for hikes along the remote northeastern coast, an area known for its marine turtles who come ashore to nest between February and October.

Hiking on Gros Piton is rated difficult due to the steep 2,619-foot climb.

Piton Flore is also strenuous, and the trail is in poor shape.

Best Guides

St. Lucians enjoy showing off their island, and you can find excellent guides by simply asking for infor-

mation in the villages near the area you wish to explore.

For organized group or private tours contact one of the following:

Island Bike Hikes
☎ 458-0908 (phone/fax); www.cyclestlucia.com
Islander Bryan Devaux and his staff take visitors on combination walking, biking, boating tours to some of the most pristine areas on St. Lucia.

Heritage Tours
☎ 451-6058 or 452-5067; fax 451-6940;
e-mail heritagetours@candw.lc
Geared toward ecology, history, and culture, these tours cover several top-rated areas of St. Lucia, including the Piton Mountain trails, Mamiku Gardens, waterfalls, and the offshore Maria Islands.

Anthony Henry
☎ 451-4535
This former warden for the St. Lucia National Trust leads walking tours through the banana fields and along the beaches of the Roseau Valley.

Jim Sparks
☎ 452-9829
Turtles come ashore to lay hundreds of eggs each year, but you have to know when and where to look if you want to be an eyewitness. Join this knowledgeable member of the Naturalist Society on Saturdays during the laying season for a fascinating up-close nature watch.

Dr. Marie-Louis Felix
☎ 450-2958
Hike to some of the world's most picturesque waterfalls with this expert member of the Naturalist Society.

Julius James
☎ 454-5014
Join the manager of the National Trust's Southern Area for an informative birdwatching hike.

Forest and Lands Department
☎ 450-2231
Call for a list of guides who are authorized to lead tours on protected lands.

National Trust
☎ 453-5005 or 453-7656; fax 453-2791;
e-mail: natrust@candw.lc
This conservation group runs nature and heritage tours to Pigeon Island, Fregate Island, Morne Fortuné, and the Maria Islands. Some outings include a beach stop for snorkeling.

Golfing

Guests of both Sandals resorts can play golf at the private nine-hole course at La Toc.

The St. Lucia Golf and Country Club is open year-round at Cap Estate on the most northern part of the island. Recently expanded to 18 holes, the challenging course stretches across acres of rolling hills with incredible views. Facilities include a driving range, putting green, clubhouse and pro shop with club and cart rentals. Fees are US$85 for 18 holes, including a cart. Clubs rent for US$20 and shoes are US$10. For tee times, ☎ 450-8523. View the course and check package deals on the Internet at www.stluciagolf.com.

Tennis

Squash courts are open to the public at St. Lucia Racquet Club and St. Lucia Yacht Club, ☎ 452-8350.

Most visitors make use of resort courts. If you're staying at an inn without a court, you can play at **St. Lucia Racquet Club**, ☎ 450-0551. This first-class facility is praised as the best in

the Antilles and features nine lighted courts and a well-outfitted pro shop.

Horseback Riding

Some parts of the island are best seen on horseback, and Saint Lucia has several facilities that offers hourly rental and specialty riding tours. Expect to pay US$20-35 for a one-hour rental and around US$55 for longer meal-included tours.

> ★ **NOTE**
>
> Créole horses are available for rent at some stables. This indigenous breed is rather small, but strong and good-natured – especially good for beginners.

Trim's Stables, Cas-en-Bas, ☎ 450-8273, has rides designed for beginners or experienced horsemen. One of their most popular trips is the picnic ride along the Atlantic coast. They also offer lessons and carriage tours.

Country Saddles, Marquis Estate, ☎ 450-1231, is known for exciting trips through the scenic countryside and along the coast. They have horses appropriate for beginners as well as skilled riders, and their guides structure tours according to experience.

International Riding Stables, Gros Islet, ☎ 452-8139, offers both English-style and western-style riding. The stables are located at the old Beausejour Estate, and riders have a choice of three tours geared to various skill levels. You can even take a swim with your horse.

North Point Riding Stables, ☎ 450-8853, organizes group rides to the remote northeastern coast, Pigeon Point and Gros Islet.

Trekkers, Morne Coubaril Estate, ☎ 459-7340, has nature trails to explore around the plantation, and riders may choose English or western saddles. They also arrange multi-day trips that cover the entire island.

Shop Til You Drop

Saint Lucia's shops are full of good buys. Look for handcrafted items such as batik, pottery, wood carvings, shell jewelry and straw products. Also, electronics, crystal, leather items and luxury jewelry often are bargains, especially at the duty-free shops.

Jewelry retailers are known to offer significantly lower prices than stores in the United States. Often, these shops purchase merchandise directly from the manufacturers and pay little or no import fees, so they can pass the savings on to customers. Expect to find a good selection of diamonds and other precious stones, gold chains, watches, and high-fashion jewelry.

There are no taxes charged on items purchased in the shops.

TIP

Larger stores with branches on multiple islands usually offer the best discounts due to the savings they derive from high-volume buying.

If you think you may want to buy jewelry, watches, crystal, or other luxury items while you're on vacation, visit a few stores before you leave home and write down prices of pieces that interest you. When

you get to Saint Lucia, you'll be able to make informed decisions about prices and standard of quality.

We recommend that you shop in well-established stores with good reputations. If you aren't sure, ask for advice from the staff at your hotel or on your cruise ship. You also can judge by the appearance of the store and its sales staff. If it's a company with outlets on several islands, it's probably a reputable store. However, many local businesses with only one store are often equally reliable, so keep an open mind. If the shop offers a guarantee and a certified appraisal on its merchandise, you can buy with confidence.

Be sure to ask if the store has an office or contact in the US for after-sale services.

Stores are open Monday-Friday from 9 am-5 pm and on Saturday from 9 am-2 pm. Some shops extend their hours when cruise ships are in port. Most accept major credit cards. The stores listed below are suggested for variety, quality and friendly service.

Castries

Bring your passport and airline ticket or ship papers to qualify for the duty-free prices.

Castries' market occupies several buildings and adjacent outdoor spaces on Jeremie Street, near the waterfront. Saturday morning is the best time to visit. Good buys on coal pots, hot-pepper sauces, T-shirts, straw items, herbs, spices, cocoa sticks and picnic supplies.

POINTE SERAPHINE

This is a large duty-free mall located near the main cruise ship dock on the north side of Castries Bay.

TIP

A ferry runs back and forth across the bay. If you have a car, park on either side and avoid driving through town.

The main office of the **St. Lucia Tourist Board**, ☎ 452-4094, is located in the modern Spanish-style courtyard of Pointe Seraphine along with restaurants and the following shops:

Little Switzerland, ☎ 451-6785, has a large selection of famous-name Swiss watches, crystal, china and jewelry. Their shops are well-known throughout the Caribbean Islands and they give guarantees and certified appraisals. Another store is located at La Place Carenage in town.

Colombian Emeralds, ☎ 453-7721, sells fine gemstones and international watches. They offer significant savings, full guarantees, certified appraisals and US after-sales service.

Colombian Emeralds has other stores at Hewanorra Airport and on the waterfront in Castries, as well as on islands throughout the Caribbean. ☎ 800-6-NODUTY; e-mail cei@candw.lc.

Jewellers Warehouse claims to save you 50% on all merchandise. Other stores are located on islands throughout the Caribbean. ☎ 800-661-JEWEL, 453-7281.

Diamonds in Paradise specializes in romantic diamond pieces. ☎ 800-94-CARAT or 452-7223.

Diamonds in Paradise has stores on other islands.

Essence, ☎ 452-3028, sells designer clothing and accessories from around the world.

Benetton, ☎ 452-7685, offers the familiar Italian fashions. You'll find a selection of unique stripes, prints and colors in the latest styles at duty-free prices. A second location is inside JR Mall at Rodney Bay, ☎ 458-0415.

The Beach Shop, ☎ 452-6909, stocks T-shirts, swimsuits, snorkeling gear, suntan lotion and other beach necessities. In addition, they carry items by Jill

Walker, including charming watercolor paintings, cookbooks, placemats and household items.

The original Natur Pur store is located at Rodney Bay, ☎ 452-9940.

Natur Pur Designer Clothing is made from all natural fibers and designed by Sylvie Calderbank. You can choose from linen or cotton. ☎ 452-4252.

PEER has co-ordinated cotton clothes with colorful prints and embroidery designs. Adult and children's sizes are available in T-shirts, shorts, caps and more. (No telephone.)

A second Noah's Arcade is on Jeremie Street in town.

Noah's Arcade, ☎ 452-7488, has several shops around the island. All carry a good selection of imaginative handcrafted items such as straw hats, steel pans, hammocks and jams, along with books, maps, film and suntan products.

Bagshaw Studios, ☎ 452-2139, e-mail bagshaws@candw.lc, is an internationally known family-run silk-screen business that makes colorful cotton and linen fabrics and gifts. They have a working studio at La Toc Bay. Additional stores are at Rodney Bay and Hewanorra Airport.

Paramount Electronics and Musical Centre, ☎ 453-0855, features a full range of brand name electronics, cameras and audio-visual products. They have other stores on the island.

Pickwick & Co. Ltd., ☎ 459-0992, is a gorgeous shop with good buys on English imports. Prices are about half of those asked in the US for brands such as Aynsley, Dartington and Royal Edinburgh.

Studio Images, ☎ 452-6883, promises a 30-50% discount on fragrances by Calvin Klein, Oscar de la Renta, Ralph Lauren, Christian Dior and many other well-known international designers. They also offer good buys on designer sunglasses, watches, leather goods and gifts. Other stores are located in Castries, Hewannora Airport and the Rex St. Lucian Resort.

Oasis has sports gear, men's casual wear, sandals and shoes. They also carry ladies' fashions, swim wear, fashion handbags and T-shirts. ☎ 452-1185.

JQ's features international designer clothing, Caribbean souvenirs and gifts. ☎ 452-0114.

St. Lucia Fine Art, ☎ 459-0891, displays a large selection of fine local, Caribbean and international art. Be sure to look for works by internationally renowned Saint Lucian artist Llewellyn Xavier. Visitors are welcome to call for an appointment to see Llewellyn Xavier's collection at his studio in Cap Estate, ☎ 450-9155.

LA PLACE CARENAGE

La Place Carenage (☎ 452-7325) is another duty-free center across the harbor from Pointe Seraphine, on Jeremie Street, west of the local market. Stores are open Monday-Friday, 9 am to 5 pm, and on Saturday from 9 am-2 pm, with extended hours when a cruise ship is in port. Some of the most interesting shops include:

Modern Art Gallery displays a superb collection of Caribbean avant-garde art. ☎ 452-9076.

Y de Lima sells watches, cameras, clocks, jewelry, perfumes and souvenirs. ☎ 452-2898.

Gold N'Gifts features brands such as Royal Worcester, Anynsely and Poole. There are also gift items, pottery and crystal. (No telephone.)

Noah's Arcade (see listing above). ☎ 452-7488.

S&S Pricebusters is a variety store with clothing, shoes, cosmetics, household goods, souvenirs and other basic products. ☎ 452-2802.

Bagshaw Studios (see listing above). ☎ 451-6565.

Little Switzerland (see listing above). ☎ 452-7587 or 451-6785.

GABLEWOODS MALL

Located on the Gros Islet Highway north of town, this mall has an assortment of shops that sell everything from local crafts to groceries and household products. Most stores are open Monday-Friday, 9 am-5 pm, and Saturday, 9 am-2 pm, but a few have extended hours. ☎ 451-7167. Some of the shops of interest to tourists include:

Top Banana has locations all over the island and features fashion beachwear made by well-known companies such as Speedo, Hunza and La Blanca. They also carry diving gear, towels, caps and T-shirts. ☎ 451-6389; Castries, 452-9294; St. Lucian Hotel, ☎ 452-9756.

Peppermint Boutique features beachwear, women's fashions, men's clothing and local handmade gift items. ☎ 453-0008.

Mi Casa is a housewares store with all types of accessories, china and gift items. ☎ 458-0608.

Other Sunshine Bookstores are located at Pointe Seraphine and Rodney Bay.

Sunshine Bookshop features work by the island's Nobel Laureate, Derek Walcott, as well as international newspapers, magazines, novels and travel books. ☎ 453-1879.

Ti Bagay is the place for unique gifts, unusual pottery and ceramics. ☎ 451-6994.

Made In St. Lucia presents arts, crafts and gifts made by local artisans. ☎ 453-2788.

The **Sea Island Cotton Shop** has sister stores at Windjammer and Rex St. Lucian Resorts. They all feature beachwear, T-shirts, fashion clothing and original handicrafts. ☎ 452-3674.

Cards & Things, in the food court, carries a good selection of greeting cards, gift items and more. ☎ 451-6977.

In & Around Castries

Shoppers will find many fine stores south of the harbor between Jeremie Street to the north, Brazil Street to the south, Bridge Street to the west, and Laborie Street to the east.

Artsibit Gallery, at the corner of Brazil and Mongiraud Streets, exhibits a large collection of well-priced pieces by local artists. In addition, you'll find pottery, sculpture, even postcards. Among the featured artists, don't miss the fantastic works of Derek Walcott, Arnold Toulon and Ron Savory. A smaller exhibit is displayed at the Artsibit Gallery on Rodney Bay. ☎ 452-7865.

Caribelle Batik, 37 Old Victoria Road on Morne Fortuné, designs batik-art clothes and wall hangings. Visitors are welcome at the working studio and shop located in a charming old two-story Victorian-style home that's been beautifully renovated. You can watch the artisans at work on this ancient fabric art, enjoy a drink on the terrace overlooking the northern coast, and peak into the orchid nursery. Open Monday-Friday, 8:30 am-4 pm; and Saturday, 8:30 am-12:30 pm. ☎ 452-3785.

Other Caribelle Batik stores are in Gablewoods Mall and at Rodney Bay.

Bagshaw Studios, overlooking the sea at La Toc, welcome visitors to their workshop where they turn out popular silkscreened creations. Shops are scattered around the Castries area, but watching the designs emerge from the studio is especially worthwhile. Drop in Monday-Friday from 8:30 am-4:30 pm or on Saturday from 8:30 am-noon. ☎ 452-2139.

Music lovers will find a good selection of island sounds at **Jeremie's**, 83 Brazil Street, ☎ 452-5079, and **Sights 'n Sounds**, 46 Micoud Street, ☎ 451-9600 (also at the Gablewood Mall).

Bryden and Partners Ltd., ☎ 452-7591, on Jeremie Street, isn't duty-free, but they stock a well-priced assortment of Saint Lucian rums, Piton beer and other liquors.

The Perfumery, ☎ 453-7249, at the Green Parrot Inn on Morne Fortuné above the city, sells the intoxicating scents called **Caribbean Perfumes**. They offer several fragrances for women and two aftershave lotions for men. Each aroma is blended from the flowers and tropical plants that grow on the island, and priced to fit most budgets. Caribbean Perfumes are available at many resort gift shops.

Eudovic Art Studio, south of the city in Goodlands, is the working studio of Saint Lucian artist Vincent Joseph Eudovic. He has been creating contemporary sculptures from the wood and roots of native trees since he won a national award at the age of 11. Over the years, he has won additional international awards, and his studio has expanded to include a restaurant, guesthouse gallery and souvenir store. Visitors are welcome at the outdoor workshop and indoor gallery and shop that feature art and crafts by Eudovic and other local artisans. ☎ 452-2747.

The **Heritage** gift shop and boutique strives to be a one-stop shopping solution. Located at Rodney Bay across from the Lime Restaurant, they have souvenirs, art, T-shirts, swimsuits, maps, disposable cameras, pottery, spices and a long list of other items commonly needed by tourists. Their hours are 10 am-10 pm, ☎ 452-8240.

If you're looking for Caribbean-born **BASE** fashions, you'll find an extensive collection at the boutique in the **Rex St. Lucian Resort**. These functional, easy-to-wear clothes are designed and made in the islands, and make an ideal souvenir.

Hot Sauce, downstairs at the Snooty Agouti Restaurant on Rodney Bay, stocks *cool* clothing, pottery, candles, maps, jewelry, Caribbean artwork, prints and other unique gifts. ☎ 458-0071.

You can check your e-mail at Snooty's.

Outside the Castries Area

At Marigot Bay, **Bagshaw Studios**, ☎ 451-9249, has a store on the north shore, and you'll find assorted crafts at nearby **Ocean Gift Shop,** ☎ 451-4197. **Doolittles Restaurant** also runs a boutique with swimsuits, T-shirts, crafts and perfume, ☎ 451-4974. If you're looking for fishing gear or boating equipment, try **Captain Bravo**. ☎ 451-4064.

Unfortunately, the local market on the waterfront at Soufrière is disappointing. However, stop at the **Batik Studio**, ☎ 459-7232, connected to the Hummingbird Resort, on the beach just north of town. Here, owner Joan Alexander offers a collection of exquisite batik scarves, wall hangings and sarongs, which make wonderful gifts. You'll find other interesting handmade items farther south in the boutique at **Bangs Restaurant and Bar**, ☎ 459-7864, at Jalousie Cove. The adjacent rum shop has a good selection of liquor and beer.

On your way south toward Vieux Fort, stop at the **Art and Craft Center**, ☎ 451-9844, in the little village of Choiseul. The workshop isn't open to the public, but you can purchase baskets, wood carvings, pottery and other items made by residents from local materials.

Prices are good, and the quality is excellent, but service is sometimes indifferent. Go for the unique buys.

After Dark

*The **Jazz Festival** is held here in May. See page 182 for details.*

Don't miss the weekly Friday night street party in Gros Islet. The **jump up** starts at sundown when the streets are blocked off, bands set up on improvised stages, and residents set up barbeque grills and start cooking skewered conch, chicken, fish and beef. Streets are hung with strings of lights, and tourists and locals crowd in to eat, dance and listen to the drum-heavy beat of the island music. The festivities go on until early Saturday morning.

TIP

Plan to take a taxi, because parking is a nightmare, and you don't want to drive home on the narrow roads after partying all night.

Live Entertainment

Music is an important part of Saint Lucia's culture, and live bands and individuals play all around the island. The large resorts schedule steel bands, reggae singers and jazz groups most nights of the week. In addition, there are karaoke bars, piano bars, discos and night clubs. Some restaurants host theme-night buffets with limbo dancers, fire eaters and dance bands.

Chef Harry hosts entertainment at **The Green Parrot Restaurant**, ☎ 452-3399, on Morne Fortuné ev-

ery Wednesday and Saturday. A variety of performances are held frequently at the open-air **Derek Walcott Center for The Arts**, ☎ 450-0551, adjacent to the historic Great House Restaurant at Cap Estate. **JJ's Restaurant**, ☎ 458-3348, north of Marigot Bay, runs a Friday Night Jam as an alternative to Gros Islet's street party. Out on Pigeon Point, jazz lovers will enjoy the cozy **Captain's Cellar**, ☎ 450-0253.

You can attend an outdoor historical re-enactment of village life during the plantation era at the 150-year-old **La Sikwi** sugar mill at Anse la Raye, ☎ 451-4245. The stage is built into the hills, and local bands and entertainers perform before and after the full-costume play.

The area code for St. Lucia is 758.

In the little village of Grande Rivière, east of Choc Bay, an air-conditioned club called **The Drive-In** features Matchmaker nights and Caribbean-music nights (☎ 450-1397). **Waves** (☎ 451-3000), on the beach at Choc Bay, has a daily happy hour where locals and tourists hang out and get acquainted. They also have karaoke nights and bring in bands a couple of times each week.

Splash, at Rex St. Lucian Resort on Reduit Beach, is a popular disco (☎ 452-8351). On the southern tip of the island, **The Reef** (☎ 454-3418) on Anse de Sable Beach is the local meeting place. Locals and tourists enjoy drinks, shoot pool and enjoy occasional live entertainment on weekends. In Vieux Fort, everyone goes to **Chak Chak** (☎ 454-6260) to hear live bands.

You can depend on a lot of action at Rodney Bay most nights, and especially on the weekends. Here are a few hotspots:

Popular Caribbean and international music plays at **Indies** every Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday night. ☎ 452-0727. The action starts up around 11 pm.

Indies runs a shuttle service from most of the large hotels.

Back Door @ Indies (☎ 452-0727) is another popular spot, and women get in free on Wednesday nights. Also, on Wednesdays, **The Lime Restaurant** (☎ 452-0761) hosts live music and dancing late into the night. **Shamrocks Pub** is an Irish-style bar with pub food, beer, pool tables, dart boards and a live band each weekend. ☎ 452-8725.

Best Places to Stay

Saint Lucia has excellent accommodations to suit any budget. The island is quickly becoming a top destination for vacationers who favor all-inclusive resorts or deluxe private villas, and the selection of upscale lodging is splendid. In addition, budget-minded travelers are drawn to the newly-organized group of locally-owned small inns that offer high standards at affordable rates.

One thing you won't find is high-rise hotels, and only the Hyatt Regency has an elevator. Officials firmly restrict development to preserve Saint Lucia's natural and historical resources. Most accommodations are tucked into the lush landscape and well hidden.

★ DID YOU KNOW?

Government restrictions state that hotels on Saint Lucia can be no taller than a coconut tree. The new Hyatt on Rodney Bay pushes the limit with three- and four-story lodges.

Surprisingly, the majority of hotels are clustered near the capital on the densely-populated northwestern coast, while the island's international airport and

most beautiful natural sites are in the south. When you make reservations, be sure to ask which airport you will be flying into, and check to see how far it is from the place you're staying. By asking a few simple questions, you can save yourself hours of unnecessary driving. It's entirely possible to arrange flights into George Charles Airport in the north via San Juan or another Caribbean island. Alternately, you can choose to fly directly into Hewanorra International in the south, and stay in one of the excellent accommodations around Soufrière.

Tips on All-Inclusives & Private Villas

Many travelers find the all-inclusive concept the perfect solution when budgeting for a vacation. With one payment, you take care of lodging, food, and most activities and entertainment. However, all-inclusive does not necessarily mean less expensive. If you truly want to hold down costs while staying in luxury accommodations, consider renting a cottage with cooking facilities and preparing a couple of simple meals yourself each day.

When convenience and relaxation are more important than cost, an all-inclusive is definitely the way to go. Sink a few extra dollars into the one-price package, and be done with it. Once this decision is made, you have nothing to think about except having some fun and taking it easy.

Both private rentals and all-inclusives require careful investigation. Work with a knowledgeable agent (one who's actually been there) and be honest about your expectations. Or, do some sleuthing on your own.

Questions to Ask About All-Inclusives

- Are all meals buffet style?
- Does the menu change from day to day?
- Are all on-site restaurants are included?
- Does the price include snacks?
- Does the price include alcoholic or non-alcoholic drinks? Is wine served with dinner?
- What activities are organized? Is entertainment scheduled?
- Do guests have unlimited complimentary use of sports equipment? What equipment is available?
- Is there an activities director on staff?
- Are off-site excursions included?
- Is complimentary transportation provided for trips into town or to tourist attractions?
- Are tips included?
- Is there a program for children? (If you're looking for a swinging-singles spot, stay away from resorts with kids' programs.)

Run through an ideal vacation day in your mind, and jot down typical costs. Then, be specific when you ask your questions. Nothing spoils an all-inclusive vacation faster than being asked to pay for a beach towel every time you go for a swim. If the total of the extras added to the base price is something you can live with, book it. If it seems out of line, consider other options.

Questions to Ask About Private Rentals

- Has the agent actually been to the property? (Pictures don't count.)
- Is it immaculately clean? Who does the cleaning? (Professional services tend to do a more thorough job than owners.)
- What personal articles are left at the property by the owner? (Must you squeeze your clothes into a closet already packed with the owner's stuff?)
- How many and what size beds are there?
- Does the bathroom have a tub and shower? Is hot water readily available at all times?
- Are all linens supplied? How about a change of sheets? Extra towels? Soap?
- Are laundry facilities available? Are guests expected to wash linens at departure?
- Are all rooms air-conditioned?
- Are ceiling or room fans available?
- Do windows have screens?
- What appliances are in the kitchen? What is their age and condition?
- Is the kitchen stocked with basic supplies? Where is the nearest store; does it carry a wide range of imported and local products?
- How far is the nearest good beach, town, restaurant, nightspot, hospital and neighbor?
- Is there a restriction or charge for electricity or water?
- What insurance covers damage or accidents? Is a damage deposit required?

Some private properties are lavish weekend homes with all the modern conveniences and a staff of caretakers. Others are homey, well-used cottages that owners vacate when they have a renter. Most are something in-between.

Pricing

Price ranges are based on a double room during high season (excluding 8% government taxes and 10% service charges).

TIP

Almost every property on the island gives a substantial discount between May and November unless a special event is taking place.

The following price scale will help you find accommodations within your budget. Remember, when a property is all-inclusive, the price range reflects the higher cost and will appear more expensive than comparable accommodations. All-inclusives are indicated as such.

Ask about package vacations that include airfare, ground transportation, golf, diving, sightseeing, wedding services, anniversary or honeymoon extras. These plans offer savings and sometimes insure a bit of added attention from the staff.

ALIVE! PRICE SCALE	
Deluxe	More than $350
Expensive	$200-$350
Moderate	$150-$250
Inexpensive	$100-$150
Budget	Less than $100

Private Villa Rental Agencies

The area code for Saint Lucia is 758.

Tropical Villas
800-387-2715 or 450-8089; fax 450-8089; e-mail tropvil@candw.lc; www.tropicalvillas.net

Island Hideaways
☎ 800-832-2302 or 703-378-7840; fax 703-378-4722; e-mail villas@islandhideaways.com; www.islandhideaways.com/about.htm

Vacation Rentals
www.vacation-rentals.org (worldwide listings; scroll down to Caribbean/St. Lucia)

Country Villas
e-mail info@countryvillas.com; www.countryvillas.com/caribbean/index.htm

Preferred Properties
☎ 452-0732

Villas St. Lucia
☎ 800-823-2002 or 410-692-2093

Northern West Coast

EAST WINDS INN
Labrelotte Bay, Gros Islet (Box 193, Castries)
30 rooms
All Inclusive
☎ 452-8212; fax 452-9941
e-mail eastwinds@candw.lc
www.stluciatravel.com.lc/EASTWINDS.htm
In the US: E&M Assoc., ☎ 800-223-9832 or 212-252-1818; fax 212-252-1991
Deluxe

A quiet, refined inn with five-star, European-style elegance and grace, East Winds is tucked away on a

secluded beach just five miles from the capital. This property has been recently transformed by new owner Giuseppe Olivares into a romantic all-inclusive hideaway, and is expertly managed by Gareth Leach. While its amenities are first-class, its ambiance is best described as beachcomber-chic – unpretentious but genteel, hedonistic yet civilized.

Ideally located at the end of a long road off the main highway between Castries and Rodney Bay, the inn consists of 30 rooms in 15 duplex cottages. These are scattered over eight acres of lush gardens that ring with wild-bird songs and occasional squawks from Mac and Erik, the resident parrots. A central open-air lounge is furnished with comfortable seating and a selection of books and games that invite relaxation and impromptu gatherings.

A new gourmet kitchen is overseen by French chef Franck Chevrier, who creates imaginative meals to please even the most demanding guests. Returning guests, who sometimes stay for two weeks, never complain of a lack of variety. Each day, the kitchen receives freshly caught fish and lobster from local fisherman, and herbs, vegetables and fruits are selected at the market or purchased from nearby farms. Buffet breakfasts and lunches feature island fruits and vegetables along with cooked-to-order dishes and daily specialties. The best offerings are presented at a candlelight dinner, when haute cuisine meals are graciously served by an attentive staff that never lets a wine glass sit half-full.

Roomy huts with thatched roofs are set back from the water and offer the perfect spot to dine or relax.

Guests can order a cool drink from the thatched-roof bar and carry it down to the beach to watch the amazing technicolor Caribbean sunset. During the day, the long, palm-studded stretch of sand is popular with sun-worshipers. Swimmers head out to the small reef

in the middle of the bay to snorkel. Others take one of the kayaks out for a spin on the calm water.

A large free-form pool with a wide deck lures guests in the afternoon. Swimmers can help themselves to a variety of refreshments – beer, wine and top-brand liquors – at the swim-up bar. At four o'clock, tea and fresh-baked treats are served poolside.

Guest rooms in the single-level moss-green cottages are spacious and cooled by gentle trade winds assisted by ceiling fans. The bedrooms feature lovely furniture and fabrics, and the large bathrooms have unusual stone indoor-outdoor showers that allow guests private-but-open bathing. Each room opens onto a private patio outfitted with a small refrigerator, sink, table and chairs.

WINDJAMMER LANDING BEACH RESORT
Labrelotte Bay, Gros Islet (Box 1504, Castries)
114 rooms and villas
☎ 452-0913; fax 452-9454
e-mail windjammer@candw.lc
www.wlv-resort.com/
In the US: Villas St. Lucia, ☎ 800-823-2002; fax 410-692-9579 or 800-613-7193 or 800-WLV-RESORT
Expensive

Driving down the steep road that leads through the village to the hotel, you pass these white stucco Mediterranean-style villas connected by brick pathways and partially hidden by flowering vines and tall trees. The villas have one to four bedrooms, a living/dining area and full kitchen. Each is decorated with bright Caribbean colors, and doors open onto a large private terrace with majestic ocean views. Some of the one-bedroom units and all larger villas also have splendid private plunge pools.

Standard rooms feature one queen or two twin beds, air-conditioning and ceiling fan, mini refrigerator,

coffee maker, cable TV and a private terrace with a garden view. Deluxe rooms have a queen-size bed, all the amenities of a standard room, and a private terrace and sundeck with an ocean view.

On 55 acres of lushly landscaped hillside, the resort offers four dining options, three bars, a shopping arcade, on-site car rental, a gym and spa, tennis courts, a fully-staffed activities desk that organizes daily programs, and a supervised children's program. Down on lovely Labrellote Bay, the long sandy beach is lined with palm trees and dotted with lounge chairs. A sports center offers all types of water toys for both kids and adults. Pick from waterskis, banana-log rides, paddleboats, kayaks and snorkeling equipment. The dive shop arranges excursions to the best scuba areas around the island, and offers both introductory and certification courses.

Four freshwater pools provide plenty of room for swimming, floating, and water games. Almost every afternoon, one of the activity directors encourages guests to join in a game of water volleyball or other sport. For an additional charge, the hotel will arrange horseback riding, jeep excursions and boat trips. Each night brings some type of entertainment in one of the bars or restaurants.

Walk instead of ride, and you earn yourself an extra dessert!

It's possible to stay on the grounds for the duration of your trip without becoming bored with either the food or activities. The place is so large, a complimentary shuttle runs continuously up and down the steep hills transporting guests from one spot to another.

Dining options include four full restaurants and three full-service bars. **Papa Don's Restaurant**, up the hill next to one of the pools, offers Greek and Italian dishes. The brick-oven pizzas are especially popular, and there's a nightly special. **Mango Tree** looks like an elegant plantation manor and serves wonderful

seafood and steak dinners in a romantic setting overlooking the sea. **Josephine's** is an open-air restaurant set high above the beach with a gorgeous view of the bay. Créole and island specials dominate the menu, and a lavish brunch buffet is served every Sunday. **Jammers Beach Bar** separates the beach from the main pool, and offers burgers, sandwiches, salads and snacks all day and evening. At five o'clock each afternoon, a bell rings to announce happy hour. A unique dining option is to dine in your villa. The **Villa Dining** service is a great way to celebrate a romantic evening on your private patio or entertain friends. A chef helps you plan the menu, then comes to your villa to prepare your private dinner party.

SOLEIL COUCHE
Labrellote Bay, Gros Islet (Box 1504, Castries)
(Adjacent to Windjammer Landing Beach Resort)
One three-bedroom villa
☎ 800-860-8013 or 320-573-5501
e-mail obholmen@upstel.net
www.stlucia-villas.com
Expensive

Soleil Couche's website offers general island information.

If all the accommodation possibilities at the Windjammer don't meet your needs, consider this privately owned villa located next to the resort. The three-bedroom, three-level villa was built as part of Windjammer village, and is now owned by a Minnesota couple, Lynn and Obie Holmen, who fell in love with Saint Lucia several years ago during a sailing vacation. Guests who rent the villa are allowed full access to all the facilities at Windjammer Landing.

CLUB ST. LUCIA
Anse du Cap (Box 915, Castries)
372 rooms, including 55 suites
All Inclusive
☎ 450-0551; fax 450-0281
In the US: ☎ 800-777-1250; fax 212-476-9466
Moderate

Club St. Lucia recently had a $5 million renovation. Far on the northern end of the island, this everything-to-everybody resort situated on 47 garden-like acres is Saint Lucia's largest resort. You can get married in one of the two wedding chapels that overlook the sea, play some tennis on one of the lighted courts, workout in the gym, take a sailboat or kayak out for a spin around the bay, snuggle with someone special on one of the two beaches, drop the wee darlings at the supervised Kid's Club for the day, or get in on the volleyball game in one of the three pools. Or you can sprawl on a hammock stretched between two palm trees, order a fruity rum punch from one of three bars, and ask someone to wake you in time for dinner.

Scuba diving, golf, spa treatments and sightseeing can be arranged for an extra fee.

All rooms are in one-level bungalows spread among the hills, and each has a king-size bed with room for an additional single bed. Most rooms are air-conditioned, but some have ceiling fans only. All open onto private patios. Larger suites have separate living areas that are cooled by ceiling fans and can be converted into sleeping space.

All-inclusive rates include meals, snacks, drinks, watersports, playing privileges at the fine on-site Saint Lucia Racquet Club, scheduled recreational activities, live musical entertainment each night and a supervised kid's program.

LESPORT
Cariblue Beach (Box 437, Castries)
154 rooms and suites
All Inclusive
☎ 450-8551; fax 450-0368
In the US and Canada: SunSwept Resorts, ☎ 800-544-2883; fax 305-672-5861.
In the UK: ☎ 44-0870-220-2344
e-mail tropcihol@aol.com
www.lesport.com.lc
Deluxe

Not actually a health spa, but more than a resort, LeSPORT bills its product as a body holiday. This means that for one price, guests at this outstandingly gorgeous 18-acre facility can have an active resort vacation while enjoying the pampering treatments of an upscale spa. You can laze about in your robe, take a yoga class, work up a sweat in the gym, or explore the island by bike. The program is completely up to you.

If you're on a diet, order from the menu of light cuisine.

All rooms are large and handsomely decorated, with cool tile floors, marble baths, four-poster king-size beds and a private terrace with a view of the ocean. Breakfast and lunch are served buffet-style; dinner is à la carte except on special theme nights. Meals are nutritious and filling, and while you may tire of the repetition, the dishes are tasty and well prepared. Wine and dessert accompany every meal.

Save time each day to enjoy the sandy beach at LeSPORT.

Live bands entertain during dinner, and you can stay on for the floor show and dancing afterwards.

LeSPORT has added single rooms that are priced without a single supplement, for those who wish to vacation alone.

LeSPORT is known for its excellent sports and sports instruction. Scuba lessons are given for beginners, and certified divers can dive to 70 feet right from the shore. Waterskiing and windsurfing equipment and instruction are available, and you can also join an aerobics class in the pool. Bike tours are scheduled daily, and there are several jogging routes in and around the resort. Classes include such things as stretching,

yoga, tai chi, aerobics and stress management. You may be interested in a cocktail-mixing class or finally learning to calypso. Beauty and rejuvenation treatments in the tranquil Oasis spa include massage, hair treatments, saunas and facials.

RENDEZVOUS
Malabar Beach (Box 190, Castries)
100 rooms and suites
All Inclusive
☎ 452-4211; fax 452-7419
In the US: SunSwept Resorts, ☎ 800-544-2883; fax 305-672-5861
e-mail tropichol@aol.com
www.rendezvous.com.lc
Expensive

There are no TVs at Rendezvous.

Rendezvous with your significant other at this couples-only resort tucked away on seven acres of lushly landscaped grounds and two miles of Caribbean beach. You can get married or renew your vows or simply bask in the luxury of being alone together on vacation.

WARNING

The resort is across from the end of the George Charles Airport runway, but only small inter-island planes use the airport, and most couples say the distraction is limited.

The agenda at Rendezvous is geared toward pampering twosomes with plenty of individual and group activities in an intimate environment. Catamaran cruises, scuba diving, windsurfing and waterskiing are all complimentary. You can wander hand-in-hand through the garden, loll on the beach, or spend all day in the hammock on your private patio. Guests enjoy

two pools, a sauna, hot tub, gym and two lighted tennis courts.

There's live music during dinner and the piano player will entertain as long as someone is listening. Meals are served in the casual open-air Terrace Restaurant or the more formal air-conditioned Trysting Place. A pair of chefs plan and prepare a varied menu, and you're unlikely to tire of either the buffets laid out at the Terrace or the multi-course meals served at Trysting Place.

All rooms are air-conditioned and have ceiling fans and king-size four-poster beds. These rooms are relatively small, but they all have a balcony or patio.

TIP

If you choose a standard room (called superior), ask to be on the top floor so you can see the water.

The upper-category rooms are larger, with good views of the sea. Suites are exquisitely decorated with special amorous touches.

REX PAPILLON
Reduit Beach, Rodney Bay (Box 512, Castries)
140 rooms
All Inclusive
☎ 452-0984; fax 452-9332.
In the US and Canada: MRI, Inc., ☎ 800-255-5859 or 305-471-6170; fax 305-471-9547
Expensive

REX ST. LUCIAN
Reduit Beach, Rodney Bay (Box 512, Castries)
120 rooms
No meals
☎ 452-8351; fax 452-8331
In the US and Canada: MRI, Inc., ☎ 800-255-5859 or 305-471-6170; fax 305-471-9547
Expensive

As sister resorts on Saint Lucia's longest beach, these two Rex properties cover a wide range of vacation preferences. Papillon is the newer all-inclusive resort that has soared in popularity due partially to the well-known Rex name. Its lovely rooms have king-size beds or two twins. Deluxe and superior accommodations are air-conditioned, while standard rooms are cooled by ceiling fans. Each is decorated in soft island colors, rattan furniture and cool tile floors. Guests may dine at either of two restaurants, and entertainment is presented nightly in the lounge.

The Rex Saint Lucian, Royal Saint Lucian and the Rex Papillon are sister resorts.

They are all located on Reduit Beach, and owned by Rex Resorts. Visit all three on the Internet at www.rexcaribbean.com. Click on "Our Resorts."

The recently renovated St. Lucian spreads out from a pleasant lobby filled with plants and inviting couches. As you walk out to Reduit Beach, you pass through a tropical garden surrounding the pool area. All rooms are air-conditioned and have been freshly outfitted with two double beds, rattan furniture, colorful prints and TVs. If you want an ocean view, book a deluxe room that includes a mini bar and hair dryer. Since meals aren't included in the room rate, you can try the nearby restaurants on Rodney Bay, or dine at the two open-air restaurants located on the Rex St. Lucian grounds.

The beach has a dive shop and a sports center offering snorkeling, windsurfing, waterskiing and boating. Both Rex resorts have a children's program and babysitting services, and there are on-site tennis courts and shops.

ROYAL ST. LUCIAN
Reduit Beach, Rodney Bay (Box 977, Castries)
84 suites
☎ 452-8351; fax 452-8331
In the US and Canada: MRI, Inc., ☎ 800-255-5859 or 305-471-6170; fax 305-471-9547
e-mail royalslu@candw.lc
Deluxe

Even the least expensive Poolside Suites at this exquisite resort have separate air-conditioned bedrooms, sitting rooms with ceiling fans, fabulous bathrooms with two sinks, soft robes, cable TV and a mini bar. When you step up to a Seaview Deluxe Suite, you also get a balcony that overlooks the pool and Caribbean. The Beachfront Deluxe accommodations are larger and have a private terrace directly on the beach, while the largest Grand Deluxe Suites are palatial quarters with enough splendid space for a party.

There are wonderful amenities on the landscaped grounds and sandy beach. A swim-up bar and waterfall in the huge La Mirage pool is the center of activity. When you get hungry, there's a choice of seafood and island-style meals at open-air La Nautique, elegant dining at the resort's award-winning L'Epicure, and exotic specialties at the authentically furnished Oriental Restaurant. You can enjoy a massage or facial in the Royal Spa, and exercise on the Cybex equipment in the gym. Out on the beach, there's a full range of water activities. You can sign up for a tour of the island, or play a game of tennis.

SANDALS HALCYON ST. LUCIA
Choc Bay (Box GM 910, Castries)
170 rooms
All Inclusive
☎ 453-0222; fax 451-8435
In the US: Unique Vacations, ☎ 888-SANDALS or 305-284-1300; fax 305-667-8996
e-mail info@sandals.com
www.sandals.com
Expensive

Halcyon, a couples-only resort, is located north of Castries on a splendid beach with smooth sea for all kinds of land and water activities. This Sandals is a bit more laid-back than its sister resort in La Toc Bay, but it lacks done of the trademark sophistication and romance. Every room is furnished in fine wood, cool tile and bright island prints. A king-size four-poster bed faces the cable TV – perfect for late-night snuggle-viewing.

A shuttle runs between the sister resorts, and guests can use facilities at either resort.

SANDALS ST. LUCIA GOLF RESORT & SPA
La Toc Bay (Box 399, Castries)
329 rooms and suites
All Inclusive
☎ 452-3081; fax 453-7089
In the US: Unique Vacations, ☎ 888-SANDALS or 305-284-1300; fax 305-667-8996
e-mail info@sandals.com
www.sandals.com
Expensive

This resort is located south of Castries on 155 secluded acres fronted by white sand on crescent-shaped La Toc Bay. The energetic staff keeps things moving at a rapid pace, but guests can escape to their room or suite in the soft-colored hillside villas. These are elegantly decorated with mahogany furniture and

lovely fabrics. All rooms have king-size beds, cable TV, clock radios, safes, coffee makers and hair dryers. Suites include concierge service, sitting room, larger bathroom, robes and an in-room bar. Some have private plunge pools.

A recent $15 million upgrade added new suites, a 5,000-square-foot pool with swim-up bar, a new Mediterranean restaurant and a cardiovascular exercise facility.

A shuttle runs between the two resorts, and guests have the privilege of using all the facilities of both. Between them there are four super-sized pools (three with swim-up bars), six whirlpools, two well-equipped fitness centers, 10 restaurants and three piano bars. Planned activities and entertainment run all day and most of the night, and guest have complimentary use of the on-site nine-hole golf course, a variety of sports equipment and instruction (both land and sea), and exercise classes.

HYATT REGENCY ST. LUCIA
Pigeon Point Causeway, PO Box G12247
300 rooms, including nine suites
☎ 451-1234; fax 632-3025
In the US: ☎ 800-633-7313
www.hyatt.com
Deluxe

Saint Lucia's newest upscale resort sits on the narrow strip of land that connects the main island with Pigeon Point and Pigeon Island National Park. Water is an important feature here, and every guest room and all public areas have sweeping views of either the beach and Rodney Bay or the Caribbean. The low-rise complex is centered around a fantastic one-acre free-form swimming lagoon trimmed with grottoes, waterfalls and tropical landscaping.

If you book a room next to the lagoon, you will have a swim-up verandah that allows you to step from your room and into the water.

Each spacious air-conditioned room is elegantly decorated and includes every convenience. You'll be reminded of gracious plantation living by the antique reproduction furniture, bright island colors and native art. If you book a room on the private Regency

Club floor, you'll have access to a club and lounge, where free breakfast and cocktails are served.

Out on the beach, a watersports center provides kayaks, snorkel equipment and windsurfing boards. You can arrange scuba trips and boat cruises that leave right from the fishing pier. A 2,000-square-foot spa offers health and beauty treatments along with a modern, well-equipped gym. Other facilities include two restaurants, two bars, two tennis courts and privileges at the island's only 18-hole golf course.

THE ISLANDER HOTEL
Rodney Bay (Box 907, Castries)
60 rooms and studio apartments
☎ 452-8757; fax 452-0958
In the US: International Travel and Resorts, ☎ 800-223-9815; fax 212-251-1800
Inexpensive

If you're looking for an inexpensive way to enjoy Saint Lucia, consider this basic but pleasant hotel near all the conveniences of Rodney Bay and Castries. The nearest beach is a short walk away, and there's a complimentary shuttle to the waterside Islander Bar and Grill, which offers meals and lounge chairs.

Watersports toys can be rented from the Royal Saint Lucian Resort.

Owner Greg Glace is a friendly, world-traveling Saint Lucian who aspires to put his island's assets within reach of visitors on a restricted budget. Rooms at his hotel are air-conditioned and have a small refrigerator, cable TV, patio and contemporary furniture. Studios have cooking facilities on the patio. There's a swimming pool and home-style restaurant that features twice-a-week buffets and live music at the Friday-night barbecues.

GREEN PARROT INN
Morne Fortuné (Box 648, Castries)
55 rooms
☎ 452-3399 or 452-3167; fax 453-2272
Inexpensive

The motel-style rooms are nothing special, but the views from this hillside inn above the capital's harbor are terrific. If you aren't drawn by the setting and room rates, try the food. You'll be hooked for sure. Chef-owner-manager Harry Edward Joseph is a worldly epicurean who enjoys showing off his culinary talents. His weekday business lunch is the most popular meal on the island.

See the "Best Places to Eat" section for information about the Green Parrot Restaurant.

TIP

Be sure to ask for a room with a view. There's no difference in price.

All rooms are air-conditioned and have cable TV. Furnishings and decor are merely comfortable and basic. Guests have a panoramic view from the swimming pool, bar and restaurant, and some are happy to hang out at the inn all day. Others take the free shuttle to Castries or the beach, which leaves each morning and returns each afternoon.

You'll need to rent a car if you want to travel around while staying at the Green Parrot.

WYNDHAM MORGAN BAY RESORT
Choc Bay, Gros Islet (Box 2167, Castries)
238 rooms
All Inclusive
☎ 450-2511; fax 450-1050
In the US: ☎ 800-WYNDHAM or Villas St. Lucia, ☎ 800-823-2002
e-mail slurep@candw.lc
Expensive

If you get up with the spectacular Caribbean sun, you can join the aerobics class. Then it's on to tennis or

perhaps a couple of hours of beach sports. Mid-afternoon refreshments are served in the Tea Tent. Right after dinner at the Tradewind Restaurant, entertainment starts at the poolside Sundowner. If you manage to stay awake until midnight, there's a moonlight pizza party down at the beachside Palm Grill. With enough activities to keep guests on the go all day and night, this modern mega-resort is the destination of choice for many energetic vacationers. When all the fun gets tiring, comfortable rooms provide a welcome retreat. Each is air-conditioned and has a king-size bed, cable TV, clock radio, coffee maker, hair dryer and private balcony.

TUXEDO VILLAS
Rodney Bay (Box 419, Castries)
10 apartments
☎ 452-8553; fax 452-8577
In the US: Villas St. Lucia, ☎ 800-823-2002
Inexpensive

Perfect for families or friends sharing expenses.

These new apartments across the street from fabulous Reduit Beach provide one- or two-bedroom units. Housed in a two-story building with a central pool and courtyard, each air-conditioned apartment has a living room, dining area and fully-equipped kitchen and either one or two bathrooms.

Tuxedo has its own restaurant, bar, mini-market and coin-operated laundromat. There's no need for a car, since all the facilities of Rodney Bay and Reduit Beach are within walking distance.

MARLIN QUAY HOTEL & VILLA RESORT
Rodney Bay
☎ 452-0393; fax 452-0383
In the US and Canada: ☎ 800-532-4240 or 516-798-8991; fax 516-797-1349. In the UK and Europe: ☎ +44-1730-269535; fax +44-1730-260388
e-mail reservations@marlin-quay.com
www.marlin-quay.com
Moderate

Ask for a marina view when you book accommodations at this harbor-front hotel. From your window you will be able to watch the complimentary ferry transporting guests across Rodney Bay to Reduit Beach, where an area is reserved near Spinnakers Restaurant for sunning and watersports.

All the balconied rooms, suites, and villas are outfitted with air conditioning, ceiling fans, cable TVs, and attractive furnishings. The multi-room units have living areas, kitchens, private plunge pools and roof-top terraces.

Lush landscaping surrounds two courtyard swimming pools and a casual snack bar. The open-air La Pergola Restaurant, overseen by Chef Skeete, features a breakfast buffet and à la carte lunch and dinner service.

VILLA ZANDOLI
Rodney Bay (PO Box 1538 Castries)
6 guest rooms
Breakfast included
☎ 452-8898; fax 452-0093
e-mail villazandoli@yahoo.com
www.saintelucie.com
Budget

International visitors favor this hostel-like inn for its inexpensive convenience and friendliness. Each room, with or without a private bath, accommodates one to four people in basic comfort within easy walking distance of Rodney Bay's restaurants and shops. Breakfast is included in the room rate, and guests are allowed to use the inn's kitchen to prepare snacks and meals. Visitors, who tend to be young and adventurous, often gather on the garden patio to exchange travel tips and discuss the day's activities.

Central West Coast

MARIGOT BEACH CLUB HOTEL & DIVE RESORT
Marigot Bay (Marigot Bay Post Office, Castries)
30 Rooms, Studios, and Villas
☎ 451-4974; fax 451-4973
In the US and Canada: Caribbean Vacation Network, ☎ 800-278-5824
e-mail mbc@candw.lc
www.marigotdiveresort.com
Inexpensive/Moderate

Not just for divers, this lovely resort caters equally to active watersports enthusiasts and lazy beach bums. Even the standard rooms have private balconies, ceiling fans, king-size beds, and small kitchenettes. The larger suites and villas include living areas and full kitchens; villas are air conditioned. Divers make good use of the on-site scuba shop, and all guests enjoy the beach, pool, gym, shops, supermarket, and Doolittles Restaurant. Folks at the activities desk help organize island tours geared toward individual interests, but there's enough going on at Marigot Bay to fill an entire vacation week.

INN ON THE BAY
Marigot Bay (PO Box RB2377)
5 rooms
Breakfast included
☎ 451-4260; fax 451-4264. Fax in the US and Canada: 520-438-3828. Fax in Europe: +44-870-133-1008
e-mail info@saint-lucia.com
www.saint-lucia.com
Moderate

This plantation-style house is built around a white decked terrace and swimming pool that overlooks gorgeous Marigot Bay. With only five spacious guest rooms, the tiny hotel is decidedly intimate and delib-

erately romantic. Honeymooners couldn't choose a more ideal destination. The inn is poised at the top of a 300-foot hill at the edge of the bay, surrounded by lush trees, and cooled by ocean breezes. Fans hang from 10-foot ceilings over queen-sized beds and cool tile floors. Each unit has its own mini-refrigerator to hold drinks and snacks, and private baths are equipped with hair dryers. Guests enjoy a hearty continental breakfast each morning, and the friendly staff helps arrange tours and activities.

OASIS MARIGOT
Marigot Bay (Box 101, Castries)
21 rooms, apartments and villas
☎ 451-4185; fax 451-4608
In the US: ☎ 800-263-4202; fax 819-326-3816
e-mail info@oasismarigot.com
www.oasismarigot.com
Moderate/Deluxe

Four types of accommodations are available at the Oasis on Marigot Bay. The Inn is a colonial-style two-story building with a wraparound balcony overlooking the courtyard pool and bay. Each of the four large double rooms opens onto the terrace and has a private bath and sitting area.

The Ocean Cottage has four self-contained apartments. Each features a luxuriously furnished living area, bedroom with a king or queen bed, tiled bathroom with shower, full kitchen and a private terrace shaded by tropical plants. Guests have a choice of walking to the nearby beach and restaurants, or staying home to enjoy the pool and sauna, and barbecue on the open fire pit.

The Vacation Club is a cluster of 12 private sea houses that overlooks a shady beach accessible only by water. Each modern two-story house is individually decorated and features a master bedroom, living room

with a sofa bed and fully-equipped kitchen. Both the upstairs living area and downstairs bedroom have double French doors that open onto verandahs with views of the bay.

The Great House is pure self-indulgence, offering breathtaking views of the bay, mountains and sea. It accommodates up to six people in three private bedrooms (two with private baths; a third bath is off the common area). Built in the tradition of the original Great Houses that once overlooked thriving Caribbean plantations, it has a grassy lawn edged with tropical plants and royal palms, a huge cliff-side verandah and freshwater swimming pool. Classic-style columns form a grand entryway into the vast living area with 20-foot vaulted ceiling and superb entertainment system. A formal dining room sits adjacent to the kitchen that offers every modern convenience.

A housekeeper and gardener maintain the house/grounds at Oasis, and guests may ask for a chauffeur, nanny or cook.

TI KAYE VILLAGE RESORT
Anse Cochon (PO Box GM669)
33 cottages
Breakfast included
☎ 451-6210 (phone/fax)
e-mail tikayevillage@yahoo.com
www.tikaye.com
Moderate

You have to be more than 12 years old to enjoy these new hillside facilities overlooking the pristine beach at Anse Cochon. This grown-up-pleasing resort was designed by Nick Pinnock and his father-in-law, Wayne Brown, the man responsible for the legendary Anse Chastanet Resort. The cottages take full advantage of the natural landscape, with open-air garden showers and twin hammocks hanging on large ocean-view verandahs. Some of the units have private plunge pools, and all are air conditioned and furnished with king-size four-poster beds, ceiling fans, mini-refrigerators, cable TVs, and hair dryers. On-

site amenities include a massage therapist, gym, watersports facility, restaurant and beach bar. Guests enjoy a full breakfast each morning and complimentary coffee or tea in the afternoon.

Southern West Coast

JALOUSIE HILTON RESORT AND SPA
Anse des Pitons (Box 251, Soufrière)
114 rooms and villas
All Inclusive
☎ 459-7666; fax 459-7667
In the US: ☎ 800-HILTONS (800-445-8667)
www.jalousie-hilton.com
Deluxe

This massive resort is almost hidden in the dense foliage that grows around it on the mountainside between the twin Pitons. The site has won environmental awards and is designated a Rain Forest Nature Sanctuary and National Marine Reserve. Dozens of cottages are scattered among the trees on 325 acres only two miles south of Soufrière. A shuttle bus takes guests from their villas down the steep hill to the beach, restaurants and reception/lobby.

Sugar Mill rooms are located near the remains of an 18th-century sugar mill on the secluded white-sand beach. They are spacious, with king or twin beds, a large bathroom with a dressing area, and a private terrace. Hillside villas have king-size beds, private plunge pools and panoramic views of the mountains and bay. Larger villa suites have an additional separate living room. Every room and villa is air-conditioned and has a ceiling fan, mini bar, coffee maker, satellite TV and VCR. All accommodations come with bathrobes, bidets, hair dryers and make-up mirrors.

Visit the new on-site herb store that sells natural cures made from herbs grown in the resort's garden.

Tons of white sand have been brought in to transform the naturally black-sand beach at Jalousie.

Guests have a choice of four dining areas that are spread throughout the resort and include poolside and beachside service. In addition, a world-class spa offers health and beauty treatments (including one designed specifically for men) in a stunning outdoor area. There's a well-equipped fitness center, four tennis courts, a large swimming pool and lounging deck. Equipment for snorkeling, waterskiing and windsurfing is available on the beach, along with Hobie Cat rentals. Diving lessons and excursions are offered at the PADI dive center.

MAGO ESTATE HOTEL
Soufrière (PO Box 247)
☎ 459-7352
e-mail monica@candw.lc
www.magohotel.com
Moderate

Built in the rainforest above the little town of Soufrière, this exquisite inn blends perfectly with nature. Individually designed open-wall rooms are named after Roman heroes and feature Persian rugs, antiques, mosaic tiles, and hand-carved wooden furniture. Most rooms extend out to a large terrace, some have king-size four-poster beds, and all feature breathtaking views of the Pitons and the Caribbean Sea. Make reservations at the restaurant for a romantic starlight dinner.

STONEFIELD ESTATE
Soufrière (PO Box 228)
10 villas
☎ 459-5648 or 459-7037; fax 459-5550
e-mail info@stonefieldvillas.com
www.stonefieldvillas.com
Moderate

Once a cocoa plantation thriving in the shadow of the Pitons, Stonefield is now a cluster of vacation villas. Each of the individually designed cottages has high

ceilings with fans, a verandah with hammocks, and a living area furnished with antiques. Lush landscaping provides supreme privacy for guests. Ask about booking one of the units with an open-air garden shower.

ANSE CHASTANET RESORT
Anse Chastanet (Box 7000, Soufrière)
48 rooms
☎ 459-7000; fax 459-7700
In the US: ☎ 800-223-1108
e-mail ansechastanet@candw.lc
www.ansechastanet.com
Deluxe

If you like posh, skip this fabulous resort that caters to divers, nature lovers and reckless romantics. Your first clue to the drama of Anse Chastanet is the brain-bouncing, rut-ravaged dirt road that leads to Saint Lucia's magnificent Marine National Park off the beach at Anse Chastanet. If you survive the ride, you're rewarded with paradise.

There are no phones or TVs here.

The resort climbs the hill that rises steeply from the black-and-white sand beach. Rooms are large and rustically elegant, with louvered doors that open onto balconies surrounded by trees and high ceilings. You'll have the pleasant sensation of being outdoors while enjoying the comfort of inside conveniences. All the furniture is handcrafted from local wood that blends perfectly with the island art, fresh flowers, tree-house views and nature sounds that pour in from every direction.

The rooms at Anse Chastanet were designed by Canadian owner Nick Troubetzkoy to be open to nature, yet shielded from the view of other guests.

Ask for one of the premium or deluxe rooms located at the top of the hill. You'll be rewarded for the precipitous climb with breathtaking vistas of the Pitons and sea. Standard rooms are similar, but with less dramatic views and a bit less space. Each opens onto a balcony and has a ceiling fan, small refrigerator, hair

A water taxi runs from the resort beach to Soufrière.

dryer and coffee maker. The tropical decor features madras fabrics and terra-cotta tile or wood-plank floors.

The Piton Restaurant and Bar, located midway up the hill, has grand views. Beachside Trou-au-Diable Restaurant is handy for lunch or snacks. Each week the resort throws a party and cookout on the beach featuring a steel band.

Scuba St. Lucia, a five-star PADI dive center, offers underwater excursions for certified divers and training courses on all levels. Guests at the resort have complimentary use of snorkel equipment, windsurf boards and other sports equipment. Anse Chastanet has great beach access to the marine reserve. When you need a break from the water, you can play a game of tennis, workout in the gym or sign up for one of the islandwide sightseeing trips.

HUMMINGBIRD BEACH RESORT
Soufrière (Box 280, Soufrière)
Nine cabins and rooms
☎ 459-7232; fax 459-7033
In the US: ☎ 800-223-9815
e-mail hbr@candw.lc
Budget/Moderate

Located at the beginning of the road that leads to Anse Chastanet beach on the northern edge of Soufrière, the Hummingbird is the ideal low-cost retreat. Its enchanting cabins overlook the Pitons and Caribbean, and you can walk into town or to the main beach at Anse Chastanet in about five minutes. Most rooms have a private bath, but one suite and two standard rooms share a bath. One of the nine cabins has two bedrooms, a sitting area and kitchen.

The resort is rustic and cooled by ceiling fans, but there are occasional elegant touches, such as stone

walls, cathedral ceilings and mahogany four-poster beds in three of the deluxe rooms.

There's an attractive freshwater pool, and the beachside bar offers great sunset views. The Lifeline Restaurant serves some of the best food on the island, and it's a popular hangout for locals and visitors arriving by private yacht.

Owner Joan Alexander is a native Saint Lucian and gifted artist. When she's not busy overseeing the resort, she operates an on-site studio and gift shop that features her colorful batiks.

STILL PLANTATION AND BEACH RESORT
Soufrière (Box 246, Soufrière)
14 apartments, six studios
☎ 459-7224/5179; fax 459-7301
In the US: ☎ 800-223-9815
e-mail duboulayd@cardw.lc
www.thestillresort.com
Inexpensive

With two properties and one name, this resort/plantation offers guests several options. The **Plantation** has 14 apartments with either one or two bedrooms set on a 400-acre working estate a short distance inland from the coast. All the modern units have a sitting area and all, except the smaller studios, have a kitchen. The **Beach Resort** is on the north end of Soufrière Bay. Two studio and three one-bedroom apartments sit right on the black-sand beach and have wonderful views of the Pitons. The two properties are within walking distance of each other and guests have privileges at both. Together, they offer two restaurants, two bars and a pool. The Plantation apartments are a bit more expensive, but still a bargain. Discuss your choices when you call for a reservation, since you can decide to stay on the beach without a pool or in the garden apartments without a beach.

LADERA RESORT
Soufrière (Box 246, Soufrière)
18 suites, six villas
Continental breakfast
☎ 459-7323; fax 459-5156
In the US: ☎ 917-0766
www.ladera-stlucia.com
Deluxe

Ladera rivals Anse Chastanet for the title of most unusual resort on the island. Each room is different, but each allows guests unrestricted views of nature and the setting sun. Positioned 1,000 feet above the Caribbean on a hillside between the Piton peaks, the resort is designed so that all rooms, though open on one side, are completely screened from anyone passing by. Trade winds take care of bugs and the lofty location guarantees cool temperatures for sleeping.

Some accommodations feature private waterfall pools and kitchens, while others have small plunge pools. All are exquisitely furnished with four-poster beds, antiques and local art. One of the villas that accommodates up to six guests has a heated indoor plunge pool, an open-air master bedroom and bath, a separate second bedroom and bath, and a third sleeping area. Another villa that also sleeps six has a private garden swimming pool and a dining area. These are just a few of the examples of the variety of accommodations on offer.

The Dasheene Restaurant is overseen by chef Robert Skeete, who trained at the Culinary Institute of America in NY.

The grounds are lavishly landscaped and include a recently improved community swimming pool. The Dasheene Restaurant is known for excellent cuisine.

A shuttle bus takes guests into Soufrière twice a day, and those who wish to go to the beach can continue on by boat. While most guests come to Ladera for seclusion and relaxation, the resort will arrange sightseeing or sports excursions.

Southern East Coast

JULIETTE'S LODGE
Vieux Fort (PO Box 482)
16 rooms and apartments
☎ 454-5300/5301; fax 454-5305
e-mail paulaj@candw.lc
www.cavip.com/brochure/juliette.html
Budget

Friendly Juliette and her husband/chef, Andrew, own and operate this small lodge and restaurant facing the Atlantic and Maria Islands. Wave riders and windsurfers recommend this area near Vieux Fort because of the dependable trade winds and island-buffered waves. Each of the nicely furnished air-conditioned rooms and apartments has a private bathroom, patio and TV. Andrew spends most of his time in the kitchen where he prepares Creole specialties and a variety of international dishes for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Guests enjoy outstanding ocean views and gather for cocktails on the sun deck surrounding the freshwater swimming pool. Surfing, diving, and horseback riding are arranged through nearby outfitters.

FOX GROVE INN
Mon Repos/ Praslin Bay
12 rooms and one villa
☎ 455-3800; fax 455-3271
e-mail foxgroveinn@candw.lc
www.foxgroveinn.com
Budget

This small hotel is an excellent choice for travelers looking for peace and quiet on the secluded east coast. It's located among banana plantations half-way between the villages of Micoud and Dennery, overlooking Praslin Bay and the Frigate Islands Nature Reserve. The views are awesome. A large swimming

pool and snack bar sit in beautifully landscaped gardens. Rooms are attractively furnished, cooled by ceiling fans, and have private bathrooms. Owners Franz and Esther Louis-Fernand go all out on hospitality. Franz acts as head chef (guests often take the breakfast and dinner plan because of the inn's secluded location), and Esther is in charge of the on-site horse stables and horseback expeditions along the rugged east coast.

Camping

Anse La Liberté recently opened as the island's first and only campsite. The 138-acre property, south of Castries on the west coast**,** features six miles of hiking trails, a beach, running water and toilets, and a communal kitchen. Contact the National Trust office for information ☎ 452-5005 or 459-4157.

Best Places to Eat

Surprisingly, Saint Lucia has an abundance of places to eat. Locals and visitors enjoy numerous choices, from sophisticated to casual. Most serve customers outdoors on scenic patios, where meals are accompanied by soft breezes and scents from the sea and mountains.

Saint Lucia is more international in its choice of cuisine than the French islands or Dominica. You'll find all types of local specialties, such as spicy chicken and grilled fresh fish, but many chefs have been trained in Europe or the US, and their menus reflect this diversity. Prices are sometimes high because many items

must be imported. Dishes made from local ingredients are usually a bargain.

Order a Piton beer (brewed in Vieux Fort) or rum drink prepared with island Bounty rum to accompany your meal.

Several exceptional restaurants are in resorts that also have informal cafés and snack bars. Even if you're staying at a meals-included hotel, make a point of trying some of the local restaurants, where the food tends to be uniquely West Indian or Créole. You'll find particularly good and original dishes at the little beachside cafés.

Pricing

Use the chart below as a guide of what you can expect to pay for a complete dinner for one person, excluding drinks, taxes and tips. Lunch prices will be lower.

ALIVE! PRICE SCALE	
All prices are given in US dollars.	
Very Expensive	More than $50
Expensive	$40-$50
Moderate	$30-$40
Inexpensive	$20-$30
Bargain	Less than $20

Most eateries accept major credit cards.

Prices usually are listed in Eastern Caribbean dollars. Divide by 2.7 to get US$.

Castries

A lane of food stalls with outdoor tables is located at the south end of the local market. You can get inexpensive local treats here, such as curried meats, coal pot stews and fresh coconut drinks. The stalls are open Monday-Saturday, 11 am-2:30 pm.

Other quick-bite in-town eateries include **The Pink Elephant**, ☎ 453-2847, in the Cox Building on William Peter Boulevard. Expect a crowd at lunchtime. They serve bargain-priced daily specials and sand-

wiches from noon-2 pm, Monday-Friday. On Brazil Street overlooking Derek Walcott Square, you'll find **Chez Paul** (formerly Rain), ☎ 452-1515. Meals are served on the balcony, and the menu features bargain-priced sandwiches and fish meals. It's open 8:30 am-10 pm, Monday-Saturday. **Kimlans**, ☎ 452-1136, upstairs on Micoud Street on the north side of the square, serves local dishes from 7 am to 11 pm, Monday-Saturday. Vegetarians will want to try **The Natural Café**, ☎ 452-6421, on Chauseé Road. It's a health food store and restaurant open 8:30 am-6 pm weekdays and 9 am-2 pm on Saturday.

For home-style cooking, try tiny moderately expensive **Bon Appetit**, located on Morne Fortuné with outstanding views. You'll need a reservation during tourist season. ☎ 452-2757.

Two very expensive famous restaurants also sit above the capital on Morne Fortuné. Put one or both on your must-do list.

GREEN PARROT RESTAURANT
Inside the Green Parrot Hotel, Morne Fortuné
(Box 648, Castries)
☎ 452-3399
French/International
Breakfast, lunch, dinner
Reservations required
Very Expensive

Men should wear jackets at dinner and women should dress to match.

Ask for a table near the window so you'll have a view of the lights in Castries & the harbor during your meal.

Weekdays, this exquisite hotel restaurant serves an inexpensive business lunch from noon-3 pm. In the evening, a more elaborate four-course dinner is laid out on crisp table linens.

London-trained chef Harry Joseph Edwards specializes in French-inspired cuisine using local ingredients, but the menu includes such things as taco shell appetizers, Indian curries and Créole fish. You can also order shrimp, lobster or steak.

On Wednesday and Saturday, Chef Harry comes out of the kitchen to get everyone involved in dancing to the live band. On Monday nights, all women who wear a flower in their hair and are accompanied by a well-dressed man receive a free dinner. Be sure to make reservations well in advance for any of these special evenings.

SAN ANTOINE
Old Morne Road, Morne Fortuné (Box 1192, Castries)
☎ 452-4660
www.sanantoine.com
Continental
6:30 am-midnight, Monday-Saturday
Reservations suggested
Very Expensive

San Antoine serves a business lunch from noon to 2 pm on weekdays.

This luxurious restaurant was originally the site of a grand home built about 1860. Later it became the San Antoine Hotel, which burned down in 1970. Only the thick stone walls survived, and the present restaurant was built around them. The result is truly elegant. The cuisine matches the surroundings, and there is a fine wine list to complete the package. Fresh vegetables are served with all meals. Dishes include lobster thermidor, crab-stuffed pastry-wrapped chicken breast, and bearnaise-sauced steak stuffed with chopped shrimp. Finally, choose a dessert from the trolley that displays an assortment of marvelous indulgences.

JIMMIE'S
Vigie Cove Marina
☎ 452-5142
Seafood
11 am-11 pm daily
Moderate

The verandah overlooking the marina is a relaxing boat-lovers' place, perfect for a soup-and-salad lunch or an appetizer and drink at sunset. After dark, when

the lights come on in the harbor, the open-air ambiance turns casually romantic. Service is friendly and laid-back, and all the food has a fresh, home-cooked flavor. If you're really hungry, try the Harbor Catch, a seafood platter that comes with a bit of everything from the sea plus local vegetables. The menu also includes crab, fish cooked in various ways, and a delicious seafood crêpe. Order warm banana fritters with ice cream for dessert.

COAL POT
Vigie Cove Marina
☎ 452-5566 or 452-6811
Nouvelle Caribbean
Noon-3 pm and 7-10 pm
Closed Sunday
Reservations suggested
Moderate

The Coal Pot is a dining experience not be missed.

This popular spot with only 10 tables gets crowded quickly, so arrive early for lunch and make reservations for dinner. Artist Michelle Elliot and her French-chef husband, Xavier, have a long-running reputation for friendly service and excellent cuisine distinguished by the mingling of island products and classic preparation. Lunch specials feature fresh fish and seafood salads, while dinner highlights include smoked salmon, coquilles Saint-Jacques, lobster and curried meats. You have a large choice of wines, including some fine vintages from France and Chili. The open-air restaurant is decorated with Michelle's colorful paintings, which give the wood-and-stone structure a unique spirit.

North of Castries

Rodney Bay is a lively area with several good restaurants. You can't go wrong at any of them, but put Key Largo, The Lime and La Créole at the top of your list.

KEY LARGO
Marina, Rodney Bay
☎ 452-0282
Italian
Daily 7:30 am-midnight
Inexpensive

Owners Marie, Carlo and Val have recently moved and enlarged this landmark pizzeria and added pasta to the menu. You can't miss the large white Spanish-design building encircled by a red brick wall. The three owners make sure their friendly staff keeps up with the constant demand for the island's best wood-fire pizza at this spacious joint. Longtime customers have begun to appreciate the new menu, which features lasagna, cannelloni and spaghetti *pomodoro e basilico*. Top off your meal with a cup of freshly ground espresso or cappuccino.

Drop in for Key Largo's happy hour at the designer bar each day at 5:30.

THE LIME
Marina, Rodney Bay (Box 2083, Castries)
☎ 452-0761
Caribbean
Noon-11 pm
Closed Tuesday
Reservations suggested
Moderate

This multi-faceted spot is a restaurant, bar, nightclub and snack bar – all in one lovely white building on the bay. The owner goes by the name of "T," and she has a reputation for pleasing everyone, whether they've come for a quick snack outdoors or a complete dinner inside. The food is delicious and many dishes are accented with traditional island sauces. Try rotis or crêpes for a snack or light lunch, and seafood or lamb at dinner. Prices are reasonable, which is probably why you need a reservation on most evenings.

Many of The Lime's customers stay on for the late-night entertainment at the club next door.

LA CREOLE
Marina, Rodney Bay (Box 779 GM, Castries)
☎ 450-0022; fax 450-0378
French Créole
Daily lunch and dinner
Reservations suggested
Moderate

Martinique comes to Saint Lucia at this popular restaurant owned by Lise Herman, who was born on the French island and trained in Paris. Specialties are outstanding and include red snapper stuffed with sweet potatoes in a passion fruit and orange sauce, and mixed seafood in coconut and curry sauce stuffed in a christophene shell. For dessert, you can choose from a large list that includes chocolate-covered profiteroles, banana flambeé and fruit-filled crêpe. Enjoy dancing to jazz played by Third Eye Bandon Saturday nights, and dine to the soft island songs of Francis François on Friday nights.

★ NOTE

Other recommended restaurants on Rodney Bay include **Razmataz** (☎ 452-9800) for Indian food, **The Bistro** (☎ 552-9494) for French, **Miss Saigon** (☎ 451-7309) for oriental, **The Charthouse** (☎ 452-8115) for steaks, and **Capone's** (☎ 452-0284) for Italian.

SPINNAKERS
Reduit Beach, on the waterfront
☎ 542-8491
Mixed menu
Monday-Saturday, 6:30 am-midnight
Reservations accepted
Moderate

Spinnakers sits on one of the island's best and most popular beaches. They serve a full English breakfast, inexpensive lunches and casual dinners, but the most outstanding feature is the buffet filled with choice meats, vegetables and salads. Other menu items include grilled chicken breast stuffed with brie and spinach, and three kinds of lasagna. Many people like to watch the sun set from the verandah while enjoying one of the signature drinks, such as Kiss of Rose or Bloody Caesar. The two-for-one happy hour starts just in time for the daily sunset performance.

SNOOTY AGOUTI
Marina, Rodney Bay
☎ 452-0321; fax 452-9806
e-mail snooty@candw.lc; www.snooty.com
Eclectic
Daily 9 am-midnight
Bargain

This unusual place is great for a good meal or snack at a bargain price.

Clever name, clever concept. Not only an all-day restaurant, the Agouti is also an art gallery, book-swap shop, gift store, bar and Internet-connection source. The menu features homemade soup, vegetarian lasagna, moussaka and several kinds of sandwiches, but many customers come in just for one of the "Gooey Desserts," which change daily. You can also grab a cup of gourmet coffee – there are 30 blends and flavors – and go on-line for a cyberchat or to check your e-mail.

The Derek Walcott Theatre (☎ 450-0550/1) is next door. Check at the Great House for events at this small open-air playhouse.

THE GREAT HOUSE
Cap Estate (Box 389, Castries)
☎ 450-0450 or 450-0211
French/International
Dinner, 7-10 pm; tea, 4:30-5:30 pm;
happy hour, 5:30-6:30 pm.
Closed Monday
Reservations required
Expensive

This grand plantation manor brings back memories of a festive, elegant time in Saint Lucia's history. It's built on the original foundations of the de Longueville Estate, which was constructed during the 1700s. You enter the colonial-style mansion by a grand staircase, and dine by candlelight with polished service, excellent cuisine and fine wines. The EC$100 *prix fixe* meal features a choice of fish, steak or chicken accompanied by an appetizer, soup and dessert. Other menu items include lobster risotto, roast duck, lamb and several types of seafood. Try the chocolate profiteroles for dessert. Elegant dress requested.

TAO
LeSPORT Resort, Cariblue Beach
☎ 450-8551
Pacific Rim/International
Dinner nightly
Reservations essential
Expensive

Since *Condé Nast Traveler Magazine* put this up-scale eatery on its "Hot Table" list in 2000, islanders and visitors have been battling LeSPORT guests for reservations. The restaurant seats only 64 people, so call early or hope for a last-minute cancellation. The Asian-inspired gourmet dishes created by chef Jun Agad are exceptional, the black-on-white decor is chic, and the ocean views are superb.

Marigot Bay

This area has developed rapidly over the past few years, and you will find a half-dozen places that serve high-quality meals. The following are current hot-spots.

DOOLITTLES RESTAURANT
North shore at Marigot Bay
☎ 451-4974; fax 451-4973
Eclectic
Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily; happy hour 5-7 pm
Bargain/Inexpensive

Actually, the entire north side of Marigot Bay is called Doolittles because of the movie that was filmed here, but the name is claimed specifically by this waterside restaurant known for its fixed-price barbeque. For EC$45, you get soup or salad, barbequed steak, chicken, ribs or fish, a selection of vegetables and a fruit plate. In the morning, breakfast is standard waffles or eggs with bacon or sausage, and the dinner menu includes fish or meat with a choice of interesting sauces. You can get here only by boat, so if you come by land instead of by sea, take the ferry across the bay to the restaurant's dock.

Doolittles hosts Red Hot Jazz Night every Friday, Caribbean Night on Tuesdays (featuring fire-eating and limbo), and Half Price Night every Wednesday (discount drinks 5-7 pm and discount food from 7-9 pm).

61° IN THE SHADE
Seahorse Inn, Marigot Bay Road (Box 101, Castries)
☎ 451-4111; fax 451-4872
Nouvelle Caribbean/International
Dinner nightly; Sunday brunch
Reservations suggested
Moderate

The up-and-coming young chef at this small restaurant draws a word-of-mouth crowd each evening beginning at happy hour. Chef Lucia was born and trained in England, and she's won awards for both cuisine and cocktails since her arrival on the island a few years ago. She faces stiff competition for loyalty from yacht owners who pull into Marigot Bay demanding good food and better drinks, and she's making steady progress at winning devotees. Dinner selections change frequently, but you can expect a choice of fresh seafood and meat dishes.

JJ's
Marigot Bay Road, Marigot Bay
☎ 451-4076
Seafood
10 am-late
Inexpensive/Moderate

Mr. JJ's place is up the hill, a couple of miles outside the bay, on the road from Castries. He runs a friendly restaurant known for its excellent fresh fish. And, since he's not on the bay, his prices are low. Arrive early to beat the lunch crowds that come for rotis and chicken. Other busy times are Wednesday (Seafood Night), and both Friday and Saturday nights, when there's live music. Check out the mixed seafood platter – a more-than-most-can-eat Caribbean-style meal. Other menu choices include curried chicken, grilled fish and conch.

JJ is the good-natured, fun-loving organizer of the Friday Night Jam alternative to Gros Islet's famous street parties. You'll no doubt hear the booming music well before you smell the aroma of fish, chicken and ribs sizzling on the outdoor grills.

CAFE PARADIS
Marigot Bay Road
☎ 451-4974; fax 451-4973
Caribbean
Breakfast, lunch & dinner, 8 am-late;
happy hour, 5-7 pm
Reservations accepted
Expensive (dinner)

Set on the waterfront, this attractive open-air restaurant serves gourmet meals created by chef Pierre. Breakfast and lunch are inexpensive local dishes, but dinner is a more romantic affair, with the lights of the harbor as a backdrop. Arrive in time for happy hour at sunset, then move to a harborside table for a relaxing meal featuring escargots, fish or lamb served with a flavorful French-inspired sauce. Finish it off with tropical fruit or a homemade dessert.

Soufrière

ANSE CHASTANET RESORT RESTAURANTS
Anse Chastanet, north of Soufrière
☎ 459-7000; fax 459-7700
Local cuisine
Breakfast, lunch dinner daily
Reservations recommended at dinner
Expensive

The casual Trou au Diable restaurant and beach bar serves light meals of grilled fish and fresh salads, along with a lunchtime buffet and a variety of sandwiches and snacks. The more formal bi-level hillside Piton Restaurant offers more elaborate fare, featuring seafood with gourmet sauces, pastry-wrapped conch, and a selection of chicken and beef dishes. After the calorie-burning walk up from the beach, you can splurge on one of the outstanding desserts without guilt.

Both of these eateries have scenic views of the Pitons and Caribbean.

LA HAUT PLANTATION RESTAURANT & SPORTS BAR
West Coast Road, north of Soufrière
☎ 459-7008; fax 454-9463
Créole/International
10 am-9 pm daily
Moderate/Expensive

The grounds feature a tropical garden and pond, which is home to two turtles, Sam and Charlie.

You'll have great views from this pleasant restaurant about two miles north of town. The lunch offerings feature a special clam chowder, crêpes, pasta, sandwiches and jerk pork. At dinner, the highlights are jumbo shrimp in garlic butter, *lambi* (conch) in Créole sauce, and lobster in a white wine sauce. Service is friendly and relaxed. An adjacent boutique sales island crafts and gift items. Sports buffs will enjoy watching live-via-satellite events shown on a 60-inch television. Cold beer and snacks are available during games. Call ahead to request the broadcast of a particular event.

HUMMINGBIRD RESORT RESTAURANT & BAR
On the water, north of Soufrière
☎ 459-7232; fax 459-7033
French Créole
Breakfast, 7-10 am; lunch, noon-2:30 pm;
dinner 7-10 pm
Expensive

Set in a garden at the northern entrance to town, this charming restaurant features excellent gourmet meals, friendly service and outstanding views of the Pitons across Soufrière Bay. Award-winning chef Cajou creates tempting dishes using fish fresh straight from the sea and local vegetables laced with island spices. The wine list is first-class. At lunch, you can order lighter meals, such as salads and sandwiches. The Bamboo Beach Bar is an excellent place

to enjoy a drink while you watch the sun set into the sea.

Don't leave here without checking out the batik art designed by Joyce Alexander, the talented and gregarious owner.

THE STILL BEACH RESTAURANT
On the water, Soufrière Bay (Box 246, Soufrière)
☎ 459-7224
Local cuisine
8 am-10 pm
Inexpensive

The Still Plantation Restaurant, ☎ 459-7224, is at the sister property a short distance away. If one location is busy, try the other.

All the produce served at The Still is grown on the working estate using organic methods. The resulting meals are fresh and delicious. This is a good place to stop for lunch if you're on a coastal tour or heading into the nearby rain forest. Unfortunately, tour organizers know this, and you may have trouble getting good service if a large group arrives during your meal. At other times, service is friendly and efficient. The menu features seafood, but you can also order beef or pork. Everything is served with local vegetables, such as yams and christophenes. Dine indoors or on the large patio, which offers scenic views, but sometimes gets too hot during the middle of the day.

CAMILLA'S
Bridge Street, Soufrière
☎ 459-5379
Vegetarian/Créole
Lunch and dinner daily
Inexpensive

Set right in the middle of town, this tiny second-floor café with a little balcony is a casual spot serving generous portions of well-prepared food. The staff is friendly and efficient. For dinner, you can order grilled fish, barbequed chicken and vegetarian dishes.

At lunch, there's a choice of sandwiches, burgers and salads.

BANG
Anse des Pitons, Jolousie Cove, two miles south of Soufrière
☎ 459-7864
Barbecue
Lunch and dinner daily
Inexpensive

Call ahead at Bang to ask if a band is scheduled to play in the evening.

You just have to visit this kooky place to understand what it's all about. It's located in a gorgeous spot between the Pitons in Jalousie Cove, near the Hilton Resort, and is owned by Englishman Colin Tenant, better known as Lord Glenconner, the aristocratic developer of Mustique Island and eccentric past owner of a pet elephant. He ran into some ecological hurdles when he came to Saint Lucia to build a fantasy resort, so instead opened Bang, a restaurant, bar, rum shop and boutique. Locals and tourists come for the inexpensive meals and relaxing atmosphere. Menu standouts include the fish cake appetizers and meat barbequed in jerk sauce. Enjoy a drink under the shady open shelters before or after your meal.

DASHEENE RESTAURANT
Between Soufrière and Vieux Fort
☎ 459-7850 or 459-7323; fax 459-5156
Nouvelle Caribbean
Lunch and dinner daily
Reservations recommended
Expensive/Very Expensive

London chef Orlando Satchell has created a variety of new dishes to complement the renovation.

The view from this recently renovated restaurant a thousand feet above the coast at Ladera Resort is dramatic and magnificent. You look between the Pitons to the sea, so plan to come for lunch, or arrive before sunset in the evening, so you don't miss this breathtaking sight.

The menu changes, but expect to find choices such as zippy gazpacho soup, smoked fish and chicken or beef served with innovative sauces. Desserts are equally imaginative, many served flambée-style at your table.

East Coast

WHISPERING PALMS
Fox Grove Inn/Mon Repos
☎ 455-3800; fax: 455-3271
International
Breakfast, lunch, dinner
Reservations accepted
Inexpensive/Moderate

Franz Louis-Fernand has been a chef in Europe and the Caribbean for more than 35 years. Now he and his Swiss wife Esther own and operate Fox Grove Inn and the adjoining Whispering Palms Restaurant. It's worth the drive to eat at this excellent east-coast eatery. The atmosphere and decor are casual, the service is efficiently friendly, and the kitchen turns out some of the best meals on St. Lucia. Locally caught fresh fish and lobster highlight the menu, but specials are offered daily, and all meals come with side dishes. Bring a hearty appetite so you can enjoy one of the superb soups for starters and finish with crêpes Suzette.

Saint Lucia A-Z ?

ATMs

Cirrus and Plus bank cards may be used at 24-hour machines located at the Royal Bank of Canada in

The area code for St. Lucia is 758.

Castries and Rodney Bay. Cash advances are possible with a Visa or MasterCard.

Banking

Banks are open Monday-Thursday, 8 am-3 pm, and Friday, 8 am-5 pm. Barclays and Royal Bank of Canada at Rodney Bay, and National Commercial Bank in Castries are open Saturday, 8 am-noon.

Barclays Banks, located in Castries, Soufrière, Vieux Fort and the Rodney Bay Marina, will cash traveler's checks free of charge for denominations of more than EC$500.

You will find Bank of Nova Scotia, Royal Bank of Canada and Canadian Imperial Bank on William Peter Boulevard in Castries. Other banks are on Bridge Street and Waterfront Street. Branches are located in Vieux Fort, Soufrière and at Rodney Bay Marina.

Climate

Average temperatures range from a high of 81°F to a low of 68°F during the winter months and a high of 85°F to a low of 72°F in summer. It is cooler and wetter in the mountains. The driest months are January through March, and the rainiest months are June to December. The coast gets an average of 59 inches of rain per year, while the mountainous rain forest gets about 136 inches.

Credit Cards

Visa, MasterCard and American Express are widely accepted. However, most gas stations and many small restaurants and shops do not accept credit cards.

Currency

The official currency on Saint Lucia is the Eastern Caribbean dollar, EC$. One US dollar exchanges for EC$2.70. Many businesses accept US dollars, but you should carry enough EC dollars to cover one day's expenses, especially if you will be traveling outside the main tourist areas.

Dress

Attire on St. Lucia is resort casual. Swimsuits aren't appropriate anywhere off the beach. In the evenings, men and women usually dress up for dinner or nightclubs, but men are rarely required to wear a tie or jacket. Slacks and sports shirts are typical attire for men. Sundresses or slacks are fine for women.

Drinking Water

Tap water is safe, and bottled water is readily available. It is not advisable to drink from streams and rivers, no matter how sparkling clean they appear.

Drugs

There are stiff penalties for use, possession, or selling of narcotic drugs.

Electricity

Saint Lucia's electricity is 220 volts AC, 50 cycles, with a square, three-prong outlet, so you must use a converter and plug adapter for most US appliances.

Many hotels have 110-volt outlets in the bathroom for shavers.

Emergencies

Fire, police and ambulance . . . . . ☎ 911

Hospitals

Victoria Hospital, Castries . . . . . ☎ 452-2421
(24-hour emergency room)
St. Jude's, Vieux Fort . . . . . ☎ 454-7671
(24-hour emergency room)
Soufrière Hospital, Soufrière . . . . . ☎ 459-7258
Dennery Hospital, Dennery . . . . . ☎ 453-3310

Language

The official language is English, but residents speak a Créole patois among themselves.

Maps

Tourist offices, hotels and car rental agencies supply complimentary maps, and you may purchase the Ordnance Survey map at bookstores and gift shops for EC$30.

Marriage Requirements

Expect to pay about US$225 for a license, marriage certificate, registrar fees and notary services.

Couples should submit an application to the Saint Lucia attorney general through a local lawyer or other representative at least four days prior to the wedding. Both bride and groom must arrive on the island with proper identification no less than two days before the ceremony.

Political Status

Saint Lucia is an independent state within the British Commonwealth. The monarchy is represented by an appointed Governor-General, and a prime minister is the effective head of state.

Telephone

The area code for Saint Lucia is 758. For local calls, dial the seven-digit number. When calling the island from the US dial 1 + 758 + seven-digit local number. To call the US from Saint Lucia, dial 1 + area code + local number.

Phone cards are sold at tourist offices, Cable & Wireless offices, and at the Rodney Bay Marina. Both card and coin phones are located in public areas around the island.

Time

The island is on Atlantic Standard Time, which is one hour ahead of Eastern Standard Time. When it is noon in New York, it is 1 pm on Saint Lucia.

Tourist Information

St. Lucia Tourist Board
PO Box 221Castries
St. Lucia, WI
☎ 452-4094 (Castries) or 459-7200 (Soufrière); fax 453-1121
e-mail slutour@candw.lc
www.stlucia.org

Tourist information offices are located at both airports, on Bay Street in Soufrière (on the waterfront across from the police station), at the cruise ship dock at Point Seraphine, and on Jeremie Street in Castries (near the Customs Office). Operating hours are Monday-Friday, 8 am-4:30 pm.

In the US
Tourist Board of St. Lucia
820 Second Avenue, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10017
☎ 800-456-3984 or 212-867-2950; fax 212-867-2795
e-mail stluciatourism@aol.com

In Canada
Tourist Board of St. Lucia
8 King Street East, Suite 700
Toronto, Ontario M5C 1B5
☎ 800-456-3984 or 416-362-4242; fax 426-362-7832
e-mail sltb.canada@popl.sympatico.ca

In the UK
Tourist Board of St. Lucia
421a Finchley Road
London NW3 6HJ
England
☎ +44-207-431-3675; +44-207-431-7920
e-mail stlucia@pwaxis.co.uk

Internet Sites for Information

www.st-lucia.com

www.interknowledge.com/st-lucia

www.turq.com/stlucia

www.caribbean-on-line.com/sl/sl

http://caribbeanadventures.com/lucia/

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